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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

TAT Trains Bus Drivers and Casino Workers Human Trafficking



TALLAHASSEE, Fla—Attorney General Ashley Moody, Truckers Against Trafficking, the Florida Department of Transportation and Busing on the Lookout are teaming up to train more than a hundred Florida workers within the gaming and passenger transportation industries to spot and report human trafficking. Today, Attorney General Moody and TAT hosted the Florida Bus & Casino Coalition Build Out—a virtual training event enlisting more soldiers in the fight against human trafficking. The event invites key bus, transit and casino industry stakeholders to join local leaders, law enforcement and government agencies to receive training on how to spot human trafficking and discuss efforts to stop this atrocious crime.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Excited to co-host this important training to enlist even more soldiers in our fight to end human trafficking. Transportation and casino workers can play a key role in helping rescue trafficking victims, so it’s vital that we provide expert training to make sure they know how to spot and where to report suspicious activity.”

Truckers Against Trafficking Senior Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives Annie Sovcik said, “Human trafficking is a global crime, but fighting it effectively requires local strategies. Truckers Against Trafficking is grateful to the law enforcement, passenger transportation and casino gaming stakeholders in the state for Florida for recognizing the importance of building public-private partnerships to combat human trafficking – and for dedicating their time and resources to coming together around this issue.”

Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Jared Perdue, P.E. said, “The Florida Department of Transportation is committed to the prevention of human trafficking throughout Florida. FDOT understands the role we can play in preventing our transportation network from being used to exploit the vulnerable. We work to educate our employees, partners and the

general public to know the signs of human trafficking and what to do to prevent it. FDOT applauds Attorney General Moody for her hard work in bringing awareness to this issue and we are proud to be a partner in her efforts."

Members of the bus and casino industries can play a key role in the fight against human trafficking if aware of the common signs of the crime. There are 17 casinos in Florida. Normal casino-hotel activity—with patrons transiting from the adjacent hotel to the casino floor and back again, as well as the frequent exchange of cash—could help conceal human trafficking.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics lists Florida as one of the top states that employs bus drivers. Public transit operators in Florida transported 156 million riders on fixed routes in 2020. According to the American Bus Association, human traffickers use bus terminals and bus stops as recruiting areas when looking for vulnerable people to exploit, and use busing to transport victims. Bus drivers and station employees, who are properly trained to spot suspicious activity, could alert law enforcement and save lives.

Today's virtual training features a Human Trafficking 101 presentation by Katie O'Rourke, a victim-services program specialist with the Florida Attorney General's Office. There will also be a training session dedicated to bus and casino companies, a presentation by a survivor-leader/field trainer and a moderated law enforcement panel. Panel members include Assistant Statewide Prosecutors Mary Sammon and Nicole Phillips, along with Sgt. Bradley Bakeman with the Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation, City of Orlando.

More than 150 participants registered for the virtual event co-hosted by the Florida Attorney General's Office, TAT, FDOT, Hard Rock/Seminole Gaming, American Gaming Association, Florida Public Transportation Association and Florida Motorcoach Association.

In addition to this latest training endeavor, Attorney General Moody previously partnered with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to launch the Highway Heroes initiative. Through this program, more than 6,400 drivers have received TAT-certified anti-human trafficking training. These drivers are equipped to help keep an eye on Florida's 12,000 miles of highways and report suspicious activity to law enforcement. To learn more, click here.

Registration for the upcoming 2022 Human Trafficking Summit is now open. The summit brings together local, state and national leaders working to eradicate all forms of trafficking. It is being offered virtually starting Tuesday, Oct. 4. To register, visit HumanTraffickingSummit.com.

To learn the signs and how to report human trafficking, visit YouCanStopHT.com.