

## Hearing Transcript

### Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on Ending Modern Slavery

February 15, 2017

CORKER:

Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. I'm going to rehit the gavel since people are tied up in the back for a variety of reasons.

I want to call the meeting to order. I want to thank everybody for coming today. And to those who are here and have traveled extensively to be here, I want to apologize on the frontend for what's happening today. We have two votes at 10:30, which means that people will be streaming in and out of the meeting. And secondly, unfortunately, I understand there's a Democratic caucus meeting that was called without talking to some of the chairman.

So, in any event, that doesn't take away from the importance of this. I just hope that people will bear with us. We're at a historic turning point in the global fight in modern slavery today. Thanks to the incredible efforts of so many committed individuals. Two of them are with us today, several are in the audience, and certainly many up here at the dais. Faith great based groups, aid organizations throughout the U.S., and just people around the world that come together around this issue that we're highlighting today.

This is the third year that we've held a hearing to highlight, shine a light, on slavery day, and the End It Movement has been building for about 10 years now. People around the world are very, very familiar now with this scourge on mankind. Across the country, people have made personal statements about the need to end modern slavery by wearing a red X like so many of us are doing today. And this year, on February 23rd, during a Senate recess, this day will take place.

In marking End It Day, we highlight the horrific nature of modern slavery. We also highlight progress that's being made as the U.S. prepares to embark on unprecedented global effort to end the scourge on humanity and we certainly have some pioneers today who've been very instrumental in laying the foundation for that.

Starting with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, there's been a growing awareness increasingly effective anti-human trafficking work in the United States. This is important because as we begin to implement the authorization of the End Modern Slavery initiative to measurably and sustainably ramp up all of our efforts worldwide we can build on what is occurred.

And I want to take this moment to thank people here on the committee that unanimously passed out several years ago this bill, and then continued to work to make sure after about a two-year process we actually pass the authorization. I think people understand appropriations are already in place. And now, the real work begins against standing on the shoulders of our witnesses here today and so many others.

Along the way, we've had -- we've seen efforts to make a difference as I just mentioned. And our first witness today is Mr. Ashton Kutcher. He is the co-founder of Thorn, an organization that works for law enforcement to rescue trafficking victims by leveraging the very technology they used in -- to abuse and exploit them. We welcome him today. He, by the way, flew all night. He is working right now on a film. And so, he caught a red eye in after having dinner with his wife, very smart man, on Valentine's Day. And he is leaving immediately after this.

But I'll tell you, if you knew of what he and his organization has done, it's inspirational, and the metrics that they're able to help us with, the way they're able to interdict in advance now what's happening is phenomenal, and a true testament to entrepreneurialism and people taking a risk, in this case, towards a social good. I had a few moments with him. I'm even more thankful for him and his commitment to this, and became interested just by saying that it was occurring and felt that he could do something about it.

We also welcome our second witness, Mr. -- Mrs. Elisa Massimino, President and Chief Executive Officer of Human Rights First, which is engaged in the fight against modern slavery. Thank you so much for what you've been doing, and her testimony today.

We're also happy to have with us today the founders of Passion Movement and the Passion Church, Louie and Shelley Giglio. I'll have to say that they are the people that brought awareness to me. They are the people that have instilled the awareness in young people all across our country. They want to be a part of ending this. I thank them for their personal inspiration and the inspiration they are to so many people around the world every day.

We also have Jenny Brown, the campaign director of the End It Movement, who obviously for 10 years is making people aware. In many ways, this awareness is what has led us today. We also -- to today, we also like to welcome Mr. Tim Estes, just serendipitously, this has nothing to do with our involvement. He heads the -- he is CEO of the Digital Reasoning, which is based in Tennessee, and they're actually using intelligence to interdict and help with the tools that Thorn is putting in place.

I want to also thank Ernie Allen for being here as well. Ernie founded the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and one of our greatest leaders on this issue, people in this movement knowing well. I also want to welcome former U.S. representative, Susan Molinari, from Google who has been involved in this even before being involved with Google.

So, with that, thank you all for being here. It's a great day for us, a lot of work ahead. I'd like to introduce our outstanding ranking member, Ben Cardin, my friend.

CARDIN:

Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you for making this one of the first hearings for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in this Congress. It speaks to the priority that we believe that we must pay to modern-day slavery trafficking. And we are proud of the progress that we have made in regards to dealing with this issue. It's been -- thanks to U.S. leadership and many of the people in this room.

Susan Molinari, it's nice to see you again, we served together in the -- in the House of Representatives. It's always a pleasure to have Senator McCain on this committee, he served here for a while. I was little suspicious when I saw him in the -- in the facility. I thought he was coming over to take our office space as well as our jurisdiction for the Armed Services Committee. That had me a little bit concerned, but it's always a pleasure ...

MCCAIN:

I came to counsel you.

(LAUGHTER)

CARDIN:

Your counsel is always welcome. But it -- Senator McCain is one of our great international champions on human rights and he's always very kind in the comments he makes about many of us, but we all have been mentored by Senator McCain on his passion to stand up for what is right and to do that regardless of the political consequences. When you stand up for human rights, you're standing up for what makes America the great nation it is. So, Senator McCain, it's great to have you here and thank you for your incredible leadership.

Mr. Chairman, we've been talking about trafficking for long time. And quite frankly, it was the U.S. leadership, it was the congressional leadership that made this issue the priority of our nation and has made progress globally on trafficking, whether it's trafficking for sex, whether labor issues, so many areas in which we have seen people abused around the world.

I want to thank you for your leadership. It is tough to get anything done in this body. But through your persistent leadership, we've been able to leverage a very small amount of federal funds with private sector dollars that will make a difference globally on our fight against trafficking. And you stuck with it, you got done, and thank you for doing that.

I want to thank Senator Menendez for his leadership on this issue. He's been one of the great champions on trafficking and standing up for the integrity of the Trafficking in Persons report, which in the last administration, a Democratic administration, there was bipartisan criticism for the manner in which the Obama administration we believe brought in factors that should not have been brought in to the rankings on the Trafficking in Persons report.

I'm proud of the work that's been done by the Helsinki Commission. I had one time, had the opportunity to chair the Helsinki Commission. It was the Helsinki Commission that raised these issues in the international forum. Chris Smith now is our special representative to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. He's made a career priority of dealing with trafficking.

Mr. Chairman, as you can see, there have been members on both sides of the aisle to recognize that this indeed is modern-day slavery and we have a responsibility to root this out wherever we

find it, and it cannot be compromised for other areas. This is something that in and of itself must be our highest priority.

So, we can celebrate the success that we've had, but we know that too many people are at risk. I visited the victim centers and have seen the victims of trafficking. I've seen the victims of trafficking in Europe. I've seen the victims of trafficking in Asia. I've seen the victims of trafficking in the United States, and it's heartbreaking. And we know that there are victims and we need to recognize them as victims.

I want to make just one other comment if I might, and that is, there are many reasons I was concerned about the president's Executive Order on immigration and refugees. But one of the reasons is the impact it has on victims of trafficking. I'm not clear whether those who had TVs when in fact still be -- who are victims of trafficking could have come into this country under that ban.

I know that many of the refugees from Syria are potential victims or are victims of trafficking that we are -- that our refugee program has a major impact. We know that the Rohingya population of Burma were subject to trafficking. Many were allowed to come to the United States and are put on hold as a result -- were put on hold as a result of the president's Executive Order.

So, I just urge us that as we looked at our priorities for protecting those who are victims that we recognize that we and our zell (ph) to protect our nation on things like this Executive Order has an impact on protecting people from the scourge of trafficking and modern-day slavery. And I would just urge us to make sure that when we say this is good to be our priority, that you are to protect these victims, that we look for every possible way in order to be able to accomplish these goals.

As the chairman said originally, I apologize that the Democratic members are going to have some conflicts -- there's some conflicts on floor votes. But I must tell you, this is a very, very important hearing. And one, we thank our witnesses, and we thank the interest that we have from the private sector to work with us to find ways that we can be more effective in stopping modern-day slavery.

CORKER:

Thank you so much.

And with that, we'll turn to my friend, and as been mentioned, someone who's been fighting for the rights of people who don't have them all around the world, one of the crankiest members that we have here in the United States Senate. But we're glad that he has come to our -- come to our hearing today, and I want to thank you personally for your and Cindy's leadership on this issue. I want to thank you also for allowing the modern slavery initiative to be carried on the NDAA last year. Thank you for hanging with us, but showing the leadership you have, I know you're going to make a few comments. We appreciate that and we introduce you now.

MCCAIN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will now translate the chairman's remarks in English. I want to -- in the interest of time, Mr. Chairman, I would like my statement be made part of the record and just say that the reason why I'm here is to thank you, thank Senator Cardin, thank Senator Menendez especially, and all members of the committee for this bipartisan effort. If it had not been for yours and Senator Cardin's tenacity and dedication to this issue, it wouldn't -- it would not have passed into law as part of the National Defense Authorization Act.

So, I want to thank you and I want to thank all members of this committee for their effort and their -- highlighting this terrible, terrible issue that unfortunately thanks to a lot of things including social networking seems to be growing rather than lessening throughout the world.

I also want to thank Elisa and Ashton. Ashton, you're better looking in the movies.

(LAUGHTER)

MCCAIN:

Anyway -- Anyway -- I want to -- I want to thank you very much. And on a personal note, I'm proud of my home state of Arizona for being a leader on the issue. I applaud the work of my wife, Cindy, for years have dedicated her time and effort on this. But I want to thank Thorn especially for their efforts.

And just finally, Mr. Chairman, this issue is so terrible and so heart wrenching and so compelling that a lot of time some of us would rather talk about more pleasant things. And so, I thank you for everything that you and members of this committee but especially you and Ben have done in furthering this effort. And someday it will pay off and we will hear from our witnesses of the compelling stories that are so deeply moving and I can't think, frankly, of a higher priority. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CORKER:

Thank you so much for coming, we appreciate it, thank you.

With that, and setting the stage for the fact that we have 27 million people around the world today that as we sit here in this hearing are living in slavery; 24 percent of those are in sexual servitude; 76 percent are living -- working in -- living in cages at night, working in fishing, working in brick towns (ph), working in rug manufacturing. We have two of the best witnesses we could possibly have and people who have committed their lives and resources to this.

Our first witness is Mr. Ashton Kutcher, co-founder of the Thorn, Digital Defenders of Children. And Ashton, I just want to say, again, your story, for those people who are involved in venture capital and entrepreneurialism, it will be uplifting to see what you have done solely to help other people. I look forward to your testimony.

Our second witness today is Elisa Massimino, President and Chief Executive Officer of Human Rights First, we thank you again for being here. If you would give your testimony in the order introduced, any written documents I have, without objection, will be entered into the record. Again, thank you so much for being here.

KUTCHER:

Thank you. It is an honor to be here. As a young man raised and brought up in the public school system, I pledge my allegiance to that flag every single day and the honor -- maybe one of the greatest honors in my life today is to be here and leverage the work that -- that I've done as testimony that may in some way benefit this nation that I love.

I'd like to start by saying thank you to Chairman Corker for your leadership in this endeavor, and to Senator Cardin, your leadership has been extraordinary. And I'd like also say thank you to the rest of the committee that has supported this effort. This is a bipartisan effort, and in a country that is riddled with bipartisan separation on so many things. Slavery seems to come up as one of these issues that we can all agree upon, and I applaud you for your agreement and I believe in you and your leadership and your ability to take us out of it.

I'm here today to defend the right to pursue happiness. It's a simple notion, the right to pursue happiness. It's bestowed upon all of us by our constitution. Every citizen of this country has the right to pursue it. And I believe that it is incumbent upon us as citizens of this nation, as Americans, to bestow that right upon others, upon each other, and upon the rest of the world.

But the right to pursue happiness for so many is stripped away, it's raped, it's abused, it's taken by force, fraud or coercion. It is sold for the momentary happiness of another. And this is about the time when I started talking about politics that the internet trolls tell me to just stick my day job. So, I'd like to talk about my day job.

My day job is as the chairman and co-founder of Thorn. We build software to fight human trafficking and the sexual exploitation in children, and that's our core mission. My other day job is that of the father of two, a two-month-old and a two-year-old. And as part of that job that I take very seriously, I believe that it is my effort to defend their right to pursue happiness and to ensure a society and government that defends it as well.

As part of my anti-trafficking work, I've met victims in Russia, I've met victims in India, I've met victims that have been trafficked from Mexico, victims in New York, in New Jersey, and all across our country. I've been on FBI raids where I've seen things that no person should ever see. I've seen video content of a child that's the same age as mine being raped by an American man that was a sex tourist in Cambodia and this child was so conditioned by her environment that she thought she was engaging in play.

I've been on the other end of the phone call from my team asking for my help because we have received a call from the Department of Homeland Security telling us that a seven-year-old girl was being sexually abused, and that content was being spread around the Dark Web and she had been being abused and they've watched her for three years, and they could not find the perpetrator asking

us for help. We were the last line of defense, an actor and his foundation were the potential last line of defense. That's my day job and I'm sticking to it.

I'd like tell you story about a 15-year-old girl in Oakland, we call her Amy. Amy met a man online, started talking to him, a short while later they met in person. Within hours, Amy was abused, raped, and forced into trafficking. She was sold for sex, and this is an isolated incident, there's not much is unusual about it.

The only unusual thing is that Amy was found and returned to her family within three days using the software that we created, a tool called Spotlight. And in an effort to protect its capacity over time, I won't give much detail about what it does, but it's a tool that can be used by law enforcement to prioritize their caseload. It's a neural net, it gets smarter over time, it gets better and it gets more efficient as people use it, and it's working.

In six months, with 25% of our users reporting, we've identified over 6,000 trafficking victims, 2,000 of which are minors. This tool is in the hands of 4,000 law enforcement officials in 900 agencies. And we're reducing the investigation time by 60 percent. This tool is effective, it's efficient, it's nimble, it's better, it's smarter.

Now, there's often a misconception about technology that in some way it is the generator of some evil that it's creating job displacement, and that it enables violence and malice acts. But as an entrepreneur and as a venture capitalist in the technology field, I see technology as simply a tool, a tool without will. The will is the user of that technology, and I think it's an important distinction.

An airplane is a tool, it's a piece of technology. And under the right hand, it's used for mass global transit. And under the wrong hands, it can be flown into buildings. Technology can be used to enable slavery, but it can also be used to disable slavery, and that's what we're doing.

I alluded a phone call that we got from the Department of Homeland Security about this girl that was being trafficked in the Dark Web. It's interesting to note that the Dark Web was created in the mid-90s. It was a tool that was created by the Naval research lab called Thor, a tool with absolute purpose and positive intention, for sharing intelligence communications anonymously. It's also been used to help people who are being disenfranchised by their government within political dissent in oppressive regimes.

But on the other side, it's used for trafficking, for drug trafficking, for weapons trafficking, and for human trafficking. And it's also the warehouse for some of the most offensive child abuse images in the world. Now, when the Department of Homeland Security called us and asked for our help and asked if we had a tool, I had to say no, and it devastated me. It haunted me because for the next three months I had to go to sleep every night and think about that little girl that was still being abused, and the fact that if I built the right thing we could save her. So, that's what we did.

And now, if I get that phone call, and Greg, wherever you're at, the answer would be yes. We've taken these investigation times of Dark Web material from three years down to what we believe to be three weeks. The tool is called Solus (ph). Once again, I won't go into too much detail about the tool, but it's being used by 40 agencies across the world today in beta and we believe that it's

going to yield extraordinary results. And just like Spotlight, it gets smarter and more efficient and more cost-effective over time.

So, where do we go from here? What do we need? Obviously, we need money, we need financing in order to build these tools. Technology is expensive to build, but the beauty of technology is once you build the warehouse it gets more efficient and more cost-effective over time. I might be able to present to you a government initiative where next year I come back and ask for less. And to me, that's like -- it seems extraordinary.

The technology we're building is efficient, it works, it's nimble because traffickers change their modus operandi and we can change ours as well just as efficiently, if not more efficiently as they can. It's enduring, and it only gets smarter with time.

We also are collecting data, we have KPIs, we actually understand that if we're delivering value we can increase our efforts in that area. If we're not delivering value, we shut it down, and it's a quantifiable solution. One of my mentors told me don't go after this issue if you can't come up with a quantifiable solution. We can quantify it and we can make the work they we're doing and the initiatives that you put forth accountable.

My second recommendation is to continue to foster these private- public partnerships. Spotlight was only enabled by the McCain Institution and the full support of Senator McCain and the man that I find to be not only a war hero but a hero to this issue, John McCain. It wasn't just created by them, there was extraordinary support from the private sector.

The company Digital Reasoning out of Tennessee stepped up to the plate, they offered us effort, they offered us engineers, they offered to support and pro bono work. We got the support of companies that often times war with each other from Google to Microsoft to AWS to Facebook. And some of our other technology initiatives include many, many other private companies. It's vital to our success, these private-public partnerships are the key.

The third thing I'd like to highlight is the pipeline. You know, we sit at the intersection of discovery of these victims, but the pipeline in and the pipeline out are just as vital and just as important in addressing them or just as important. And I'd like to highlight one thing in particular and that in the Foster Care System.

There are 500,000 kids in foster care today. I was astonished to find out that 70 percent of inmates in prison across this country have touched the foster care system and 80 percent of the people on death row were at some point in time exposed to the foster care system. Fifty percent of these kids will not graduate high school and 95 percent of them will not get a college degree. But the most staggering statistic that I found was that foster care children are four times more likely to be exposed to sexual abuse. That's a breeding ground for trafficking. I promise you that's a breeding ground for trafficking.

But the reason I looked at foster care is it is a microcosm, it's a sample set that we have pretty extraordinary data around the date, even though we can't seem to fix it. It's a microcosm for what happens when displacement happens abroad as the unintended consequences of our actions or

inactions in the rest of the world. When people are left out, when they're neglected, when are not supported, and when they're not given the love that they need to grow, it becomes an incubator for trafficking. And this refugee crisis, if you -- if we want to be serious about ending slavery, we cannot ignore -- we cannot ignore our support for this issue in that space because, otherwise, we're going to deal with it for years to come.

The outbound pipeline, there's just not enough beds. The bottom line is once people -- once someone is exposed to this level of abuse, it's a mental health issue. And there aren't enough beds, there's not enough support, and we have to have the resources on the other side. Otherwise, the recidivism rates are through the roof. It's astonishing because when Maslow's hierarchy of needs are not being met, people will resort to survival. And if this is their means of survival and the only source of love that they have in their life, that's what they go for. So, we have to address the pipeline out and we have to create support systems on the other end. It's not an entitlement, it's a demand to end slavery.

My fourth and final recommendation is the bifurcation of sex trafficking and labor trafficking. They're both aberration, they're both awful. They're both slavery and they're both punitive in fact, but the solution sets are highly differentiated. When you look at sex trafficking, a victim is most often present at the incidence of commerce, and this -- this provides an opportunity for drastic intervention. Whereas in labor trafficking, the victims are being hidden behind the manufacturers and the merchandisers, and it requires an entirely different set of legislation and proactivity and enforcement in order to shut it down.

Now, there's a lot of rhetoric that's going on in the world right now about job creation in the United States. Well, if we want to create jobs in the United States, I would ask you to consider eliminating slavery from the pipelines of corporations because a lot of that slavery is happening abroad.

And if we ask those corporations under extreme pressure that if you don't change it you are going to be penalized, and if you don't clean up that pipeline it's going to mean trouble. And they're forced to two decisions, they can either clean up the pipeline abroad or they can move the jobs to the United States of America where they can be regulated and supported. Bringing jobs to America to be the consequence of doing the right thing or can be the consequence of doing the wrong thing, but that choice is up to you.

Now, it's not lost on me that all of this disruption in our marketplace is going to have economic backlash, like that is not lost on me at all. But I asked you, did believe that Abraham Lincoln had to consider the economic backlash of shutting down the cotton fields in the South when he shut down slavery because I'm sure that weighed on his mind.

You know, happiness can be given to no man, it must be earned. It must be earned through generosity and through purpose. But the right to pursue it, the right to pursue it is every man's right, and I beg of you that if you give people the right to pursue it what you may find in return is happiness for yourself. Thank you.

CORKER:

Thank you so much. Thank you.

Elisa?

MASSIMINO:

Thank you, Chairman. Wow. I'm just digesting all of that incredible passion and intelligence and purpose from you and feeling regretful that I have to follow it, but...

(LAUGHTER)

MASSIMINO:

But thank you also, Ashton, for your -- for turning your talent, your profile, your smarts to this important issue. Thanks to this committee and particularly thank you to you, Mr. Chairman, for your outstanding leadership on this issue. We are so grateful for your efforts to promote a stronger American leadership in this fight.

Slavery is a devastating assault on human dignity. Perpetrators prey on the most vulnerable among us refugees, children, the poor. It's oppressing global problem that affects and implicates the United States. It involves multinationals supply chains, criminal enterprises, and the very terrorists and extremists our nation has vowed to combat. It tests our country's willingness to uphold fundamental rights at home and to challenge other governments to do the same.

Our country is both a source and destination country for trafficking victims and traffickers earn an estimated \$150 billion annually in illicit profits. While NGOs, like ours, and governments worldwide spend only about \$124 million each year to combat it. That is simply not a fair fight.

Meanwhile, American workers are forced to compete against free labor as companies take advantage of the global failure to enforce antislavery laws. Increasingly, organized crime rings and international terrorist organizations traffic human beings to accumulate wealth and power. And when refugees fleeing violence in Syria, Iraq and other regions plagued by terrorism and political instability don't have pathways to safety, they become easy marks for extremists to exploit.

Congress and the administration audit deepen their commitment to combating slavery not only because of the moral and economic implications but also because of the national security risks posed by corruption, terrorism, and organized crime.

At Human Rights First, our mission is to foster American global leadership on human rights. We believe that standing up for the rights of all people is not only a moral obligation but it's a vital national interest and that our country's strongest when our policies and actions match our ideals.

For nearly 40 years, we've worked to ensure that the United States acts as a beacon on human rights in a world that sorely needs American leadership. American efforts to end modern slavery are critical not only to prevent human trafficking here at home, but also to ensure that our country sets an example for others. That's why we need to work harder to eliminate slave labor from the

supply chains of American companies and to empower federal law enforcement agencies which have deep expertise in prosecuting cross-border organized crime to focus greater attention on ending impunity for traffickers and their enablers.

Right now, slavery is a low risk enterprise for the bad guys. According to the State Department's most recent Trafficking in Persons Report there were just over 6,600 trafficking convictions globally in 2015 and only 297 of those were here in the United States. Now, that might sound like a lot. But when you consider that there are nearly 21 million people enslaved around the world today, that's a pitifully small number. We have to do better.

The United States has made important progress in the fight against modern slavery and this committee has really been a key driver of that progress. The bipartisan cooperation and concern that's been demonstrated by this committee is a model for the future of our country.

Today, Human Rights First is releasing a new congressional blueprint for action to dismantle the business of modern slavery in which we detail additional measures that Congress should take. Modern slavery is a complex global crime and we have to tackle it using a range of strategies.

In my written testimony, I detailed our recommendations and they include using the funds authorized by the End Modern Slavery Act to combat trafficking globally and to attract new resources from other governments and private donors, bolstering the Trafficking Victim Protection Act to ensure that law enforcement and prosecutors have adequate resources to hold traffickers accountable, intensifying enforcement of the Tariff Act's ban on importation of goods made with slave labor, fully leveraging the power of U.S. government contracting to make sure we're not purchasing goods and services made with slave labor, and shielding the TIP report from political influence by passing a bill recently introduced by Senator Menendez and Senator Rubio.

Each of those measures is critically important, but we also have to pay attention to prevention. Traffickers are ruthless and opportunistic, they are drawn like sharks to those in distress, and it's hard to imagine people in more distressed today and refugees. In fact, with the possible exception of Vladimir Putin, nobody benefits more from the refugee crisis than those in the business of modern slavery. The truth is we simply cannot combat slavery without attending to those most vulnerable to it. And today more than ever, that means helping refugees.

As the State Department explained in last year's TIP report, refugees are, quote, "prime targets," for traffickers and refugee camps are ideal locations for them to operate. The majority of the world's refugees are women and children and the U.N. special rapporteur on trafficking reports that since 2011 thousands of them, thousands, have disappeared, presumably abducted for purposes of trafficking related exploitation.

The U.N. rapporteur also concluded that one of the primary causes of the rising trafficking worldwide is increasingly restrictive and exclusionary immigration policies. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, 10 percent of the world's refugee population is in urgent need of resettlement. Yet last year, only 1 percent were moved to places of safety.

In light of this crisis, the recent Executive Order blocking the resettlement of Syrian refugees and reducing refugee admissions and halting the entire refugee resettlement program for the foreseeable future is particularly cruel. Turning our backs on the people most vulnerable to slavery, the very people this committee has worked so hard to help, not only breaks faith with our most cherished ideals but it's a gift to those who profit from human misery. As a nation that once pledged to stand firm for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity, I think it's unconscionable. It's not who we are, it's not what we stand for.

Time and again, national security leaders from Republican and Democratic administrations have testified that protecting refugees does not put Americans at risk. On the contrary, accepting Syrian and other refugees actually makes us safer. By helping them, the U.S. safeguards the stability of our allies that are hosting the vast majority of refugees, counters the work provision of extremists that we are somehow at war with Islam, and strengthens our moral credibility, credibility that can be leveraged on other issues.

Thirty two of our nation's most prominent national security leaders, retired flag officers, former government officials, including the former secretary of Homeland security, Michael Chertoff, former national security adviser, Steve Hadley, and former director of the National Counterterrorism Center said in this statement, and I quote, "Despite America's role as the global leader in resettling refugees, many voices call for closed doors rather than open arms. To give in to such impulses would represent a mistake of historic proportions."

The so-called extreme vetting that's sought by the administration is already happening. It takes place over many months, it involves multiple law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and the blanket ban that's been proposed would not block terrorists. It would -- our nation's national security officials already do that, but it would block people forced to flee because of persecution and violence inflicted by repressive regimes and terrorist groups. And it will block people that are vulnerable to parasitic criminals and violent extremists who profit from the global slave trade.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I know how deeply you care about ending the scourge of modern slavery and I urge you to allow your compassion for its victims to inform your position on refugees. Anyone who seeks to deprive traffickers of their ability to prey on vulnerable people cannot, in good conscience, slam the door on refugees. We are counting on you to fight any executive action that would sacrifice more innocent women and children to the global slave trade.

In particular, I urge you to support Senator Feinstein's bill that would rescind the executive order. In the midst of the biggest crisis -- refugee crisis since World War II, the world is really watching what we do. If we want our country to be a global leader in the fight against modern slavery, we can't turn our back on the very people most likely to become its victims. Thank you.

CORKER:

Thank you.

Ashton, I was going to ask you a different question but after hearing your opening comments, I'm going to reframe it. I think you shared how you became involved in this and your compassion and

passion for ending it, and we thank you for that. We've embarked on a program now that is a public-private partnership of major proportion. It's where the U.S. would lead, we get other governments to help on a two to one basis. In the private sector, they help on a three to one basis to put in place an effort that would have metrics and effort where we would -- they will measure results, measure the problem, measure results.

And I just wonder based on the experiences that you've had in the private sector, establishing metrics and models to end this scourge on mankind, what kind of advice would you give us as we set up this international effort that's based here, but led by the United States?

KUTCHER:

I think my first piece of advice would be to lead with compassion as you approach these private sector companies. These companies have customers and they care about their customers and they want their customers to know that they're doing the right thing. And I think great companies have a conscience that provoked them to actually do the right thing.

The second thing -- I mean, you basically said it in your question to some degree, which is, you have to be able to measure results. And I oftentimes believe that if you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it, and if you can't improve it, you're working blindly. And -- but also what I would encourage you is to ensure that whatever buckets of capital are being deployed to actually do them -- to deploy that capital in a way where there isn't a risk aversion in shooting for the fences.

If what it is that you're trying to apply to the issue doesn't have a potential 10X outcome but also the same potential to fail, you may not get the results that you want. And as I work with entrepreneurs across the country, the extraordinary thing about the entrepreneurs I worked with in Silicon Valley is that they're not afraid to fail. It's unbelievable.

As a kid from Iowa, I was thought to be responsible at everything and make sure every dollar counts. They just go for it like full blown. And so, if you deploy the capital in a way that allows people the opportunity to fail but also massively succeed, you may find that you have much greater outcomes than what you do by making the safe choices with the deployment of capital in large chunks into, you know, some -- well, obviously that's, you know, the good field to do it. You know, oftentimes, the greatest idea comes when those people aren't afraid to fail. And so giving them permission to go for -- to shoot for the fences, I think is an important -- is an important piece of the puzzle.

CORKER:

I'm going to turn to Senator Menendez. We -- until -- these people are coming back, by the way. We got a vote that's underway. I think we're going to try to time it where we do both at one time. Senator Menendez, do you want -- do you want to go and come back?

MENENDEZ:

Yes, Mr. Chairman. I think there's only two minutes left in the vote. So, I do intend to come back notwithstanding the caucus.

CORKER:

OK. So, here's what we're going to do, and this is strange, but we're going to recess for just a moment until the next person comes back and we'll resume. And I apologize for this, but I'm sure lots of people would like to have their photograph taken.

KUTCHER:

I prefer not to talk to no one.

(LAUGHTER)

CORKER:

OK. We'll be back.

KUTCHER:

Although I do it quite often.

CORKER:

We're in recess until someone returns. Thank you.

(RECESS)

YOUNG:

Well, I want to thank our witnesses very much. As you're well aware, we have votes going on right now. But with the chairman's guidance, we shall continue here out of respect for your time. We'll begin with my own questions. As other members roll in, we'll entertain those.

But Mr. Kutcher and Ms. Massimino, thank you so much for your leadership. This is such an important area where we're shining in national spotlight on the importance of it and I'm just so grateful for your efforts.

Do you both agree as you work on this issue that the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons report is a valuable resource in your efforts to fight human trafficking in the scourge of modern slavery?

KUTCHER:

Yes.

MASSIMINO:

Yes, absolutely. We do. I do.

KUTCHER:

You presumably you can't solve a problem if you don't know how big it is.

YOUNG:

That's right. So, presumably, we want our report to be as accurate and as comprehensive as possible, right?

MASSIMINO:

We do.

KUTCHER:

Yes.

YOUNG:

These are what we call leading questions in perfection, right?

(LAUGHTER)

YOUNG:

So, tomorrow, I plan to introduce a piece of legislation called the Department of State and United States Agency for International Development Accountability Act of 2017. The legislations needed to provide this committee greater transparency regarding the more than 180 General Accountability Office recommendations for the Department of State and USAID that haven't been fully implemented. And among the recommendations are at least two or three recommendations pertaining to this very area about which you and so many others are passionate.

The legislation will enable Congress and this committee to conduct even more effective oversight, something we can always improve upon. It would require state and USAID to provide a timeline for implementation of these anti-trafficking proposals as well as other proposals, and it would ensure that any GAO recommendation that is not implemented, we're certain as to -- as to why that is, giving some rationale for that.

So, given the large number of open recommendations, it would be my hope that most would be implemented and that we can get bipartisan support for this effort. So I I'm inviting members of both sides of the aisle to work with me on this legislation and we'll be dropping it tomorrow.

I'd like to ask both of our witnesses about the growing impact of sexual exploitation, forced labor, what we generally call modern slavery here in and in our own country. Some of my thinking on this issue is informed by good work that has been done in -- in my own state of Indiana. With the leadership of the Indiana attorney general, our former U.S. attorney, and now so many other stakeholders in our state, we have put together a report in our state, the 2016 Indiana State Report on Human Trafficking.

Typically, we ask for unanimous consent to enter this into the record. I consent to have it entered into the record.

(LAUGHTER)

YOUNG:

And I think this will be instructive to further your efforts and those of others who are working on this issue. This was the product -- this report and the related initiatives in my own state of Indiana. It was a product of a public-private partnership to address the unique challenges that our state and others are facing.

The report indicates that the coalition of service providers served 178 trafficked youth in 2016 alone, 178 people in my home state of Indiana. Of those youth under age 21 served by Indiana providers statewide in 2016, nearly all were girls, 94 percent. As a father of three young girls, I feel particularly passionate about the need to address this, but I note that this is something that afflicts both genders as well.

The report found nearly 30 percent of those impacted are 15 or younger and more than 10 percent are between the ages of 12 and 14. All of my children are younger than that. And Indiana victims were as young as 7 when first trafficked. These statistics are, of course, heartbreaking, they speak to the broader challenges we face nationally and internationally.

If you could each speak to whether the trend lines in the state of Indiana are reflective of your findings across the country?

KUTCHER:

With respect to -- with respect to sexuality...

YOUNG:

The ages, the gender.

KUTCHER:

Yes. So, most studies have found that the average age of entry into sex trafficking is 12 years old. And I think most of the numbers that you find in your state are accurate. I would -- you know,

relative to the legislation that you were alluding to earlier, I would like to ask then what. So, we measure it, and we know it's a problem, but then what? And what are the consequences if the reporting isn't there, and what are the consequences if they don't use the tools. So, the tools aren't being used. I'm just curious about that relative to legislation.

YOUNG:

I'd be happy to indulge that question. So, working with the chairman and the ranking member and in people on both sides of the aisle, I think we should make every effort to make sure that the State Department has a specific, concrete plan of action, comprehensive in nature, that would arrest this problem internationally since that's the focus of the State Department.

We also need to have a domestic, a range of solutions to this. And then we need a resource, we need the resource for our action plans, at the state level, at the federal level. I know that's been a point of emphasis in your own testimony.

Here on this committee, perhaps the first step is to see the numbers of both sides of the aisle continue to work to push an authorizing bill, something the chairman has really shown some leadership on recently, and to the extent we can include human trafficking and other things moving forward on that. That's part answered your question.

So, Ms. Massimino, do you have additional thoughts on the trend lines in Indiana versus the country?

MASSIMINO:

Well, I do. I do think those are reflective of what we see. I also want to say I think it's really important the state level focus on trafficking. You know, this, as I said, it's a big global problem, very complex, and there are lots of different ways we need to tackle it. But it's really quite important -- that sounds like extraordinary leadership at the state level to be tackling these issues really kind of close to home.

And, you know, one of the things that that you hear -- heard from both of us, is the importance of, you know, reporting is for the purpose of being able to measure progress, right? And to get data so you know what strategies are working. One of the things that Human Rights First has been really focused on is making sure that state and federal law enforcement have the resources that they need to go after higher up in the food chain, if you will, of these criminal enterprises that are exploiting people, both on labor and sex trafficking.

You know, labor trafficking cases are much smaller percentage of the overall prosecutions that happen, but there are greater percentage of victims that are in the labor trafficking area. They're much more complex and expensive cases to bring, but they're really important. And I think that Congress should pay particular attention in making sure that these human trafficking prosecution units are well funded and can work in coalition at the state, local and federal level law enforcement to integrate the solutions to those problems.

You also mentioned the public-private partnership piece.

YOUNG:

I did and that was my next question. So, thank you for anticipating it, but I don't have to cut in the chairman's time now that he's re-entered the room. Maybe he could speak to the importance of that each of you.

I know, Mr. Kutcher, you mentioned in your testimony as well, IPATH is a -- the Indiana State report on human trafficking and the entity it created to help fight the scourge in her own state, it's a not-for-profit initiative. There are -- there are over 75 organizations statewide focused on collectively addressing this issue, and perhaps you could speak to the importance of these sorts of public-private partnerships in addressing modern slavery each of you. Thank you.

KUTCHER:

Sure. Just to touch on the point that Elisa is making. I think -- I mean, another thing that shouldn't be lost is the focus on our demand prosecution in the space. These are victims. You said it yourself, these kids are 12-years-old, 13-years-old. That's not a criminal, that's a victim of a crime. And if we're not prosecuting the buyers, if we're not prosecuting the traffickers, not just for trafficking, but that's statutory rape and it should be treated as statutory rape and prosecuted as rape. And I don't think that we do a good enough job yet of addressing that issue in that way.

YOUNG:

Do either of you have thoughts on what we might do to bring more of these individuals to justice to prosecute them?

KUTCHER:

It's my understanding that there's initiative underway currently that will address this in the -- within the judiciary system and I -- and I think the best thing that we can do is to support that initiative.

YOUNG:

Continue to support that, yes.

MASSIMINO:

I think also making sure that and the safe harbor provisions that have had so much bipartisan support here in Congress that would protect -- treat victims like victims are very, very important. The public-private partnership aspect of this I think is absolutely key. You know, there's a lot the government can do and should be doing that all governments globally should be doing and collaborating together on this.

But as Ashton pointed out, the supply chain issue, the pipeline into slavery, we have to be looking at that. And so, I would say the public -- there should be kind of three Ps in this public-private partnership. It should be also the private sector companies, American companies in particular. You know, when I talk about American leadership on this issue, I don't just mean the American government, I mean all of us.

And in many places in the world, American companies are the American brand, so making sure that we enlist those companies, especially now that you all have passed legislation that amends the Tariff Act, which for decades allowed for this importation of child made and slave made labor through this consumptive demand loophole that was in existence, you have closed that loophole down and that is a potentially transformational thing in the world of human trafficking.

Now, we have to make sure that it's enforced, that the Department of Homeland Security enforces it, that companies understand what they need to do. And most companies don't want anything to do with slavery, but many of them don't understand what they need to do to look at their supply chains and make sure that there is no forced labor and there are no child labor. So, we have to come together to talk about that.

And one of the things that you all could do, a report was due to you from the Department of Homeland Security I think back in August on how they are implementing this very important new provision that you passed and it hasn't -- it hasn't been submitted yet. So, I would urge you to ask that and we would love to come in and talk with you about it.

YOUNG:

Well, thank you. Thanks for your ideas and again for counsel on this. And we'll continue to stay vigilant even when the klieg lights are off and that's really the important thing with respect to our oversight role. And thank you so much for this opportunity. Mr. Chairman?

CORKER:

Thank you. Thank you very much for coming back and filling in, I very much appreciated. I have had two experiences, I guess, that had a big impact on me. One was hearing the statement of someone in the audience, Louie Giglio, speaking to his congregation saying, "If not you, who?" And I think we all know what that means, and, you know, we together, who hear that message, need to be the people who will involve ourselves in ending this.

The other was experiencing a group of about 20 young ladies in the Philippines going to the police department, they're saying what a U.S. private entity was doing to teach them about prosecution, saying how this is a crime of opportunity. Most people think this is largely the mafia and they definitely are involved, but it's really, as you both know, a lot of small business people that take advantage. They have dominion over people and they use this to make money.

But part of it -- part of our efforts, and we need to measure this, and we need end it, and that needs to be our focus, part of the effort also has to do with what we do with victims after they've been victimized. And one of the efforts that to me was so impressive was saying how these young ladies

who may be were 13 or 15, and maybe they were in the rural part of the Philippines, and maybe a gentleman came by and said, "Hey, how would like to go to Manila for the day?" And they find themselves in Malaysia in a brothel for seven or eight years or they find themselves in a place that they cannot get out of, but they also have to have a place to go. They have to have a place to be protected from people who, otherwise, would kill them for testifying against them. They got to have a way of coming back into society.

Could you speak to personal experiences there and what we need to do as a nation working with others to address that component also?

KUTCHER:

Sure. This is the pipeline out. But there are four or five organizations domestically that you are doing extraordinary work. There's an organization called My Life, My Choice, Journey out, Courtney's House, Rebecca Bender initiative, and Gems. I've had the privilege to spend some time with Gems and look at the organization and sort of assess the effectiveness of it. They do extraordinary work, they recognize these victims as victims, they do the best they can to rehabilitate them.

I think one of the things we can definitely do is look across that sector of NGOs and find the ones that are -- that are the most effective. And then try to assess what the best practices of each one of those individual organizations are, and then replicate that and grow it. You know, as you said, as I said, I think there has to be accountability in our spending relative to this, but there's some simple low hanging opportunities within these organizations that I actually think the private sector can come in and be drastically supportive.

I mean, the administration roles within these organizations are being done a lot of times on these kinds of books and I think that there is enterprise software that they could be quickly -- that could be given away for free by many private companies, and that could create massive efficiencies inside of these organizations. But at the end of the day, it's -- you have to have a place to keep these people.

There -- you know, I was in Russia, and the girls that were getting led out of the orphanage, I'll get let out about the same age, and the traffickers would circle the orphanages waiting for those girls to hit that prime age where they could use them. So, if people don't have a place to go, if they don't have an environment of love and support, and then the expertise to help them with the mental health issue of the abuse that they've endured, they don't get better.

And so, I think mental health is a gigantic issue in this country in a lot of ways and I think that we need to really look at this, not only as a slavery issue but as a mental health issue and ensure that that the finances and the support is going into that arena as such.

MASSIMINO:

This is a problem globally as well, it's very similar.

You know, we have worked closely with many Yazidi women. We gave our human rights award last year to a Yazidi woman activist who was -- she and her husband are rescuing women from -- who have been abducted and are being held in sexual slavery by ISIS. And these women are so traumatized, they are now barred from coming here under this order, but they're -- you know, they have said, "If you can't save us from this, then just bomb us because we can't survive this."

You know, one of the things that I think the United States could be doing there, they need mental health services desperately even if they can't come here to get them. And I think there's more that we can be doing to fund organization that can provide those kinds of services to women who have suffered just unspeakable, where many of them are children.

CORKER:

Thank you.

Senator Menendez is back, and he was the lead other sponsor of this legislation, and has been my friend and certainly advocate for victims in human rights. So, I thank you and look forward to your questions.

MENENDEZ:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I'd ask to submit into the record Human Rights versus Blueprint Congress -- How to Dismantle the Business of Human Trafficking.

CORKER:

Without objection.

MENENDEZ:

Mr. Chairman, first of all, let me say that my experience in the Senate -- I was speaking with Senator Young, I'd say, about the difference between the House and the Senate where we both have served is -- the fundamental difference is that one senator committed to an idea or an ideal and willing to fight for it, who can create change. And you did that in the context of human trafficking, you made it a singular issue, you were focused on it like a laser beam. I'm glad to have worked with you on it but, you know, clearly you deserve the credit and it's the embodiment of what you can do in the Senate when you choose to do so. I want to salute you on that.

I've listened to both in your testimony with great interests and we're having a major caucus on Russia right now, but this is important. So, I have questions for both of you and I hope to get through it in my time. Maybe the chairman will be a little generous with the time.

CORKER:

Take as much time as you wish.

MENENDEZ:

All right, thank you, I appreciate it. I won't do that, but I do have some questions.

Ms. Massimino, as you know, there had been serious questions, both from the Foreign Relations Committee and civil society organizations, regarding the integrity of the past two years Trafficking in Persons report. To me, that report as the gold standard and I want to -- I want to show why it's so important.

Mr. Kutcher said the reports are important, but what do we do with them. He's right. But the -- reports begin a template for how we judge countries in the world. The amendment that I got into law, which now denies a country who is in tier 3 of trafficking, any preferential access to the United States in terms of any trade agreement is incredibly important, a powerful tool but, of course, we need the right type of reporting to ensure that those who are in that category don't get arbitrarily and capriciously removed from that category unless they've done the things that are necessary to in fact be removed from it, which would be good for the victims of trafficking in their countries because that means they will have improved their standards.

Now, I introduced legislation, bipartisan legislation with Senator Rubio, and Senator Kane, and Senator Gardner that makes sweeping reforms to restore the integrity to the Trafficking in Persons's ranking process. I know and I believe there is bipartisan consensus that for reforming the ranking process is a priority that we should address early in this Congress.

Can you speak to, number one, your organization's reactions to the 2015, 2016 TIP report? And what damage, if any, do you think that created and to the importance of the integrity of the TIP report as a foundational issue for us globally to challenge countries in the world to do what we think they should be doing to end modern day slavery?

MASSIMINO:

Yes, absolutely. And thank you very much for your leadership on that legislation and on the TIP report. You know, we -- Human Rights First has focused a lot of attention over many years on reports coming out of the State Department that have been mandated by Congress and why it's important for those reports to be basically just the facts, you know, not colored by political considerations.

For many years, the State Department country reports annually, we did a critique of those because we felt there was too much political influence going across, you know, administrations from different parties, but there was too much political influence and other concerns going into kind of shading the facts in those reports. So, we've been very vigilant about it.

And actually, I think we stopped doing that critique because we felt that the State Department country reports had improved significantly and we're much more objective. The point of reports like that is really to provide a baseline for policy. They're not policy, but they're to provide a baseline for policy, and that's why it's so important that reports like this State Department country report and the TIP report are just the facts, really have -- and have integrity.

So, we were concerned as many were that there appeared to be movements of some countries on up on the scale without any demonstration or transparency about what the reasons were for that. And, you know, the TIP report has actually been a really important tool for diplomats and others to use. We have instances where countries, you know, have really been pressured to actually improve their performance as a result of the ranking process.

So, it's really important to have transparency about how those rankings are made, and to make sure that countries don't get a free pass just because we have other business to do with.

MENENDEZ:

Yeah. That's a concern.

MASSIMINO:

Yeah.

MENENDEZ:

This is either as important as this committee has dictated in a bipartisan way, which means that you cannot subvert its importance because you have economic reasons with a country, maybe to some degree even security reasons with the country. Because when you do that then you undermine the essence of the importance and the integrity of trying to end human slavery.

In that that regard, my legislation requires TIP rankings to be contingent on concrete actions taken by a country in the preceding reporting period and that the State Department must specify how these actions or lack thereof justify the ranking. A recent GAO study highlighted this is a major gap in the existing TIP ranking process. Would you support such changes?

MASSIMINO:

Yes, we would.

MENENDEZ:

OK.

Mr. Kutcher, let me ask you. Extraordinary work, and I heard it just before I had to leave to go vote your answer to the chairman about having the freedom to go big and take a risk to develop the technology that might be the next cutting-edge on how we further help law enforcement and other entities both capture those or reclaim those lives that have been lost to human trafficking, capture those who were the traffickers themselves, prevent efforts in trafficking.

So, how is it that -- if you could -- I sit in another committee here, on the finance committee, which deals with all tax trade and incentives, if there was a way to incentivize that effort by you and

others similarly situated, is there a specific way beyond letting you go big? Is there -- is there -- are there tax incentives? Are there -- I think about already the systems you have and I think about other countries. Maybe one of the requirements we should have is that other countries should use the best available technology at the time, something that we do not have a requirement to.

In an estimation as to whether they are moving in the right direction on human trafficking, can you help me a little bit on that on how we take what you've done and create a greater opportunity for its deployment?

KUTCHER:

Yeah. I think at its core the reason why most of our partners, private company partners in this space or technology companies is that they're naturally incentivized to actually do something about this. So for the most -- for the most part, there's CDA 230 that -- these companies want to perform -- they want their tool to be used in the right way, right? And they don't want their tool to be regulated because then it regulates the potential of the tool for good.

And I happen to support that notion that it -- that it is the user that is that the malicious actor. But in order for these companies to maintain that stance, it is my belief that they have to support efforts in technology to actually grow tools that fight against these types of atrocities that are happening on their platforms. And so, therefore, we've had extraordinarily willing participants in that effort.

I think -- I think we've also launched best practices guide for companies relative to trafficking, because I think that when your employees are involved in this space or your company in some way, shape or form touch the space, I think it actually affects the quality of your company and the performance of your company in the long-term. And so, I think having companies become aware of these best practice guides -- but I think there's also a larger issue relative to what we call modern slavery and I think it's actually just in the nomenclature of calling it modern slavery.

It's slavery. It's just slavery. It's actually -- I think we do disservice to the people that were slaves in this country for so long and the oppression that they feel -- felt in the years following by not calling it what it is. And if we just call it slavery from a nomenclature perspective and acknowledge the fact that just because a person is of a different nationality or that they're being sold for sex makes it something different so that we can pat ourselves on the back and say, "Well, we abolished this and we've already done all that we can." I think that that -- I think that will have a giant impact because I think it motivates people emotionally to actually build things.

On the other side, I think that these tools are best built in the private sector. And the reason why I think they're the best built in the private sector is we're willing to take those risks and we're willing to create that accountability. Now, when we get to the level where it's becoming a fundamental institution to solving the problem and we have 4,000 law enforcement officials and 900 agencies using the tool, well, now we've shown its effectiveness, we've shown that it can be measured, we've shown that it to be improved. And at that point in time, I think it's -- it becomes incumbent upon the public sector to step up.

We give our tools away for free, they're 100 percent free. I look at it like Facebook, we grow, grow, grow, grow, grow. And at some point in time, we can turn on a revenue model that creates sustainability within our organization. So, I think they're best incubated in the private sector but at a certain point, the public sector needs to recognize that tool, it works, we need that tool, it's effective, and we can leverage it domestically and internationally to behoove everyone.

MENENDEZ:

Thank you.

And finally, Ms. Massimino, let me ask you. Your testimony noted a new provision in the bill that myself, Senator Rubio and others have introduced that requires the multilateral development banks to conduct a human trafficking risk assessment for projects in tier 2 watch list or tier 3 countries as a condition of U.S. support.

Now, it's my hope that these assessments can draw together a wide variety of stakeholders from international civil society organizations, local communities, law enforcement and others to ensure that development bank projects work to combat human trafficking whenever possible. And I hope that as part of that organization such as yours would be called upon by the multilateral development banks.

But it seems to me that we have done a few things here that are important, but we have a lot more tools at our disposition that we can use the multilateral development banks, having a strong TIP report, thinking about how we incentivize the technology either by allowing it to be free as you suggested in terms of its ability to go big, thinking about the privacy elements so that we ultimately don't constrain it in a way that is unnecessary. And maybe even looking at other countries in saying, one of the ways in which we'll test whether or not you're moving in the right direction is are you employing the latest available technologies that can help you.

And so, I appreciate what we have gleaned from both of your testimonies and look forward to continuing to work with you. Do you have a comment on that?

MASSIMINO:

Yes. I just want to underscore that I think, you know, this provision that you talked about with the requiring an assessment implementation of anti-trafficking in order to -- with the development banks I think is just part of this what we've been talking about how you take the data and use it to leverage change.

You know, there -- I completely agree with you, Senator, that we have a lot of tools that are not being fully used to tackle this big problem, you know, and a lot of what you all have done here has, you know, moved the ball forward between the federal acquisition regulations and the statute seeking to implement that, making sure that the changes to the Tariff Act get implemented. There's a lot that this body can do to take those tools and make sure that they're being fully exploited for good and that takes a lot of attention, it sometimes takes money.

But if we can pull this all together, I think that's the way that we're really going to make a dent in this problem.

MENENDEZ:

Thank you. I see that it'll help me write the bill and I appreciate the support alongside....

RUBIO:

Thank you both for being here. And I'm sure the chairman told you he had to go vote, he'll be back any minute now.

But let me just start -- I know you talked about the integrity of the Trafficking in Persons report. I don't know what's been discussed already, but one of the things -- one of the point I've made, this is always an issue when it comes to human rights, and that is to balance between our geopolitical relations and information about potential allies that is embarrassing. And I think you would both concur that, first of all, the Trafficking in Person report all the people think about is just a piece of paper the U.S. government publishes, but is in fact been impactful.

Part of our role here is to shame those who are less than cooperative in the efforts to tackle this, including people here at homes built (ph) and governments abroad, and I just think I want to reiterate what I appear has already -- what appears already been discussed, how critical it is that this report be free from political interference, and to be blunt, the notion that someone could come in and say to the State Department, "Look. I don't want to change the tearing of the country because we got a good thing going with them on some other foreign policy issue. We don't want to offend them."

And it is my feeling that that occurred in the last report. That cannot happen again. And so, our hope is to prevent them from happening. And I would imagine every advocate out there believes that as well that these issues are -- especially since we as a nation are also hopefully being honest about our own internal problems with regards to that and that -- let me -- the first talk about, Mr. Kutcher, is that in the Thorn website -- again, you may have talked about this already, it may have been asked, and I apologize. But the website talks about people using the internet that show child abuse material or doing so with seemingly low risk of getting caught.

So, I'm interested in learning how Thorn collaborates with law enforcement in the United States and around the world, especially with countries that have weak criminal justice systems to change the sort behavior with impunity of this criminal activity, and at the same time using that also as a tool to hopefully train law enforcement agencies about victim friendly procedures.

There are places around the world quite frankly who have jurisdictions in United States that if, for example, someone is being trafficked into prostitution they are arrested for the crime of prostitution and treated as a criminal as opposed to as a victim. And we had arguments with law enforcement about that, some of whom argued to us that that's the appropriate way to do it, that's the only way to break them free from the endeavor. In other cases, I have had some disagreements with regards to that.

But how is Thorn working to kind of end that cycle of impunity where people think we can do whatever we want, the chances of getting caught are very low. And quite frankly, the penalties in some places are not very high.

KUTCHER:

Thank you for the question.

You know, at its core, one of the issues with sex trafficking, specifically domestically and most certainly internationally, is the lack of attention that it actually gets from law enforcement -- resources, I should say. You know, most trafficking divisions in police departments across this country are maybe one or two people and they're understaffed and underfinanced. And so, they really are -- when we first went in, we are looking at the tools they were using and then we're going to the chat rooms and trying to strike up conversations with traffickers or trafficking victims in order to get leads on investigation.

So, we saw -- and specifically relative to minors, that if we could create a platform or tool that helped them prioritize their caseload by understanding what we call maturity score of the victim, we could help get the victim as early as possible out of the system and as young as possible out of the system first.

So, we've created this prioritization tool. I'd be happy to show you Spotlight at some point in time. I don't want to reveal too much about it because I don't want risk the enduring power of the platform, but we help them prioritize their caseload. And basically, what we're doing is just taking this internet, which is largely anonymous in many ways, and making it far less anonymous. We can track victims as they get trafficked across state lines. We can create -- we have investigation tools that allow us to understand the full picture, the full story of the trafficking victim overtime and the trafficker over time, which is admissible in court, which is really good evidence and in order to prosecute these cases.

RUBIO:

And this question is for both of you, it's one of the things that you hear a lot about which I find to be one of the most grotesque and outrageous things I've seen and that's the conduct of Backpage.com. There's a recent article in "Miami Herald" that talked about a local organizations filing a federal lawsuit against Backpage.com and found that in my hometown of Miami-Dade, over half the adult victims in human trafficking cases and 40 percent of minor victims were being advertised on Backpage.com.

And as you're probably aware, the Senate has also conducted an investigation. And so with regard to that, they issued a report. So following that report, Backpage has closed the adult section in which advertisers solicited services. However, it's been reported that the ads are now running on the dating section and some are now asserting, and I agree, that this is nothing more than a publicity stunt. And I would welcome both of you to comment on that change. In the end, didn't they just change the name of the same activity?

KUTCHER:

So, you know, this has been happening long before Backpage. Six years ago, I started going after the VillageVoice for advertising sex in their platform. And actually, the way I went after them is that I went after their advertisers, and said hey, do you know that this is happening? And the advertisers, they pulled back, and the VillageVoice started have some issues relative to that.

I talked to the founder and CEO of Backpage five years ago, and said we're watching, we know what's happening, I know you know what's happening. You can either join us in the fight against it or you're going to become the tool for it. And it really sort of didn't want to hear about it. Craigslist, on the other hand, the founder, Craig Newmark, was very willing and interested in inviting this and was actually distancing himself from what was happening in his platform.

We watched, we technically watched the traffic move from the adult section to the women-seeking men section. We watched it. We analytically watched it happen moments after it was shutdown, moments. So, you know, you look at it and you go, it is a game of Whack-A-Mole, right? And the only question that we have is not relative to censoring it, it's not relative to shutting down the internet, it's relative to can we build the tools that are better than their tools to fight what's happening.

There are sites in the United States that do this other than Backpage, a lot of them, in fact, there are sites internationally that are doing this, there are other sites. It's happening all over the place, it has been happening for decades in print media. We're now just recognizing it for what it is, and I think that that's the most important part. And secondarily to that, is let's build the tools, let's finance the tools, and let's deploy the tools to fight back.

MASSIMINO:

So I think that Backpage has to be held accountable for what they're doing and one of the things that they're doing right now, there's evidence that shows that they have been doctoring the ads, up to 80 percent of their ads to conceal the underlying transaction, meaning that they are not, when they do that, they should not be protected by the law. You know, the current law, and there's some good reasons for it, that says that internet sites that allow third parties to post aren't responsible for the content of that post.

But you don't have to change that law to go after what Backpage is doing right now. It appears that they are intentionally altering ads to make underage people look like they are consenting adults. And that is despicable, and wrong, and they should be held accountable for that.

CORKER:

Thank you so much, thanks for being here.

Before turning to Senator Coons, Jean Baderschneider is here, she's the lady sitting up front. She has been on operational later here, she, years ago, in an airport in another country saw a young

lady that she thought was being trafficked. She went to talk to officials, she came back, she was gone. And it haunted her, and she's committed her life today with this issue. So we thank you for that, we thank you for helping us to be in the place that we are today, ready to launch, what is happening.

And with that, Senator Coons.

COONS:

Senator Corker, I just want to thank you. I want to thank you for taking the experiences that others have brought to you and applying your skills, your leadership, and your passion to mobilizing this committee, to engaging in a bipartisan way of legislation, to fighting tirelessly for funding and to empowering organizations that have got the skills, the tools, the passion to now go out and make a difference. And I'm excited about the opportunity to continue working with you in this critical fight, end human slavery in the modern era.

Thank you for your leadership, Chairman Corker. And there are other great folks on this committee who have also been leaders on it, Senator Cardin, Senator Menendez, and many others.

As some of you may know, I've spent a lot of my time in Africa as a member of this committee as the former chairman of the Africa subcommittee. It is tragic what -- we know happens to people who are victims in this country, and in countries around the world.

So, I mostly just want to thank you, Ashton Kutcher, thank you for your leadership and your innovation. And I'm excited to see your tool and how it works, and to better understand what Thorn is deploying here in the United States. And you've got some terrific people working with you, Joy and others, who help make this real each and every day.

And to Ms. Massimino, forgive me, in Human Rights First, thank you for also providing the analysis and the support. There are a lot of great organizations in the space, we need many, many more. The scope of this problem dwarfs the resources, we currently have deployed against it.

But you know, look, there are days here that are somewhat partisan, and where it's somewhat frustrating, and we don't get as much done as we like. This is a moment that is worth focusing on because it is a moment where we can recognize significant progress. I am the co-chair of the law enforcement caucus. And given what I read in your testimony, what I've heard, I hope we have a chance to talk further about exactly how we get U.S. law enforcement better funded, better engaged, better equipped to deploy this tool and these resources, better trained.

In my previously -- previous life, I was responsible for accounting police force and I'm confident that they don't have as much in the way of resources as they would need. And we were a county that was bisected by I-95 and we're on a regular basis, we had homeless and runaway kids, we had victims of domestic violence, and I'm certain of trafficking as well. And yet, we could have done much more with more resources.

We had one officer who did what you're talking about, went into chat rooms, tried to gather evidence, tried to help pursue and prosecute child prostitution, child pornography cases, very dedicated, very loyal, very skilled officer. There are a few more resources today, but still far below what it should be.

And so, I just have three questions if I might. First, I'm interested in how we can expand Thorn's model globally, because I think you made a significant impact so far. But if you look at the level of resources and training and access in U.S. law enforcement, as we all know, in the developing world, law enforcement, courts, and transparency are significantly less resourced.

So I'd be interested in hearing how you think further investment by the United States government in the End Modern Slavery Initiative might inspire engagement from our private sector, and I think it is exciting that the digital partners and the information technology partners, Susan and others that you brought to the table here, how might more investment in our appropriations leverage significant increased resources from private sector?

Then second, what are the limits to spotlight internationally, what are the challenges you face in trying to really scale this up, but in countries where mobile technology is now widely available, but where the transparency reliability of the law enforcement system is significantly below, what we would hope and expect.

And then, just on a personal enthusiasm, a whole group of us worked together last year, Senators Flake, and Menendez, and Portman, and Merkley to pass the End Wildlife Trafficking Act, wildlife trafficking is often viewed separately from human trafficking, but it's really not. And the criminal networks that benefit from wildlife trafficking from a killing and then selling parts, whether it is rhino horn, or elephant tusks, or pangolins, and many others, are often exactly the same criminal networks that are involved in trafficking people.

And so, how could we reinforce those two efforts, which at times engage completely separate NGOs, but really with the same goal, which is to end grotesque criminal activity that destroys and denigrates wildlife, and hold committees, and enslaves people? Ashton so the first question is about how we might invest more and extend the reach?

KUTCHER:

Sure.

So, we have two tools that I talked about today that are built, and several others that are built and are already deployed. As I mentioned, heavy lifting to certain extent is done. The key to the ongoing success of the tools is continuing to iterate on those tools and make them better over time. Senator Rubio mentioned Backpage, they shutdown one section of their site, and another section pops up. These things become incumbent upon us having a malleable tool that can effectively work in all markets.

But now that the database is built and the algorithm is built relative to understanding of sexual understanding of this content, our expansion internationally is relatively simple in so much as we

just need to define the environments that are being utilized for trafficking in those spaces, and put them into our engine. Now the trick which you alluded to relative to the limits on that is there some countries where this platform probably won't work, but it's incumbent upon us to build the next tool that will work there.

You know, a lot of this trafficking in the exchange advertisement of sex slavery, you know, happens online. In some sense, there's benefit to that, right, because in some ways, it can be tracked. But building the tool relative to the specific market, is a trivial.

We're currently working with international partners. Canada is using their Spotlight tool. We're talking to U.K. about using our Spotlight tool, we think it will be very effective in those markets. And our Solus (ph) dark web tool is being used in international spaces, I will just say, by several people. And it has been proven very effective because the same dark web tool, which was created by the naval research lab, is the same tool that's used internationally. So really just training our database, having an understanding of variable languages and things like that, it's fully doable.

The limits, you know, the real limit is the fact that, you know, we're only sitting at the identification barrier, right? That is the limit, we can identify these people. I can identify all the people in the world, right, but we don't have the right resources on the inbound side and on the outbound side, it's just going to be a cycle. And I think having a holistic understanding of the issue and approaching it from that perspective is essential to actually solving the problem.

And relative to the wildlife piece, definitely on the dark web, our tool could be repurposed for specifically that. If somebody was so interested and passionate about that issue in the same way as I'm passionate about solving sex trafficking, our tool could essentially be repurposed for something like that.

COONS:

That's an intriguing conversation, I would love to follow up.

And Mrs. Massimino.

MASSIMINO:

So I think the big picture issue here is around the risk-reward equation. You know, how do you -- how do you keep people from going into the business of exploiting others through slavery. And right now, you know, this is -- as I have said, a very low risk enterprise for the bad guys and high reward. So how to flip that, you have to increase the risk that includes through law enforcement, through reputational, and other damage to companies that don't do a good job of getting rid of slavery in their supply chain, and decrease the reward.

So we have to tackle both sides of that and, you know, as you keep hearing, some of the pieces of this problem really can be solved or significantly advanced through increased resources, you know? So, on the close to home kind of perspective, in the TVPA reauthorization for example, it

would be really good to have designated human trafficking prosecutors, you know? There were only 297 of these prosecutions last year.

If there were a provision that authorize human trafficking prosecutors in key U.S. attorney's office, I think that number would go up. And they could be responsible kind of the hub, the point person for cultivating relationships with all the different agencies that deal with this. We have seen jurisdictions with that type of collaboration increases their cases filed by 119 percent, and defendants charged up by 86 percent, so some of this really is a resource question.

You know, I mentioned the federal acquisition regulations. Again, another like Tariff Act potentially transformational change in the way we do business, we, the United States do business. And I think if we were to fully implement those regulations, we need authorized human trafficking compliance advisers in the council's offices of all these agencies, state, DOD, labor, GSA, all of these places to work with the contracting officers and make sure that this is really being taken seriously.

So there are lots of, you know, there's a lot of potential here that's not being fully implemented. And with congressional oversight and attention on all of those, you all started a lot of that. Now, to following it through, making sure it's fully implemented, I think those could be transformational.

COONS:

Mrs. Massimino -- Mrs. Massimino and Mr. Kutcher, to you and your organizations and everybody who supports and volunteers with them, I'll just close by saying sexual slavery, human trafficking is some of the darkest activity that happens in the world. It thrives in dark places. It feeds on dark aspects of the human nature.

And I'm really grateful for your work, and Mr. Chairman for your leadership in shining light on this problem, and on bringing to all of us, not just hope but confidence that we can solve this. We can address this by appealing to the light within all of us, and by coming together in a way that actually brings light to the darkest conceptions. Thank you for your work. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CORKER:

Thank you very much for your leadership on this issue and so many others. I know that we got up a meeting after this, to build on this, and look at some of the tools in private that are being utilized. But I want to thank you both for an outstanding testimony, for committing your lives to this issue, for being examples and bringing notoriety, bringing awareness, if you will, to this issue that plagues us all.

There will be some follow-up questions. I know you got a couple of day jobs and you do, too, but there may be some follow-up questions afterwards. And we will try to keep those to a minimum, knowing that you got other things that you do in life. But this has been an outstanding hearing, we apologize for -- there is a lot happening up on the Hill, as you know, and has been reported. And

it has taken people in a lot of different directions right now, but this has been a very impactful hearing. And we look forward to building upon it.

One of the things that I do wish we could've touched more on is -- I know you alluded this, Ashton, but the sexual piece, and the day labor piece, there are a lot of differences that exist, too. And just some of the cultures that we deal with in other parts of the world, and the collection of passports. I know when we visit countries now, it's one of the first things that we bring up heading to that part of the world this weekend, but there are cultural aspects that are barriers.

And people, again, unwittingly think they're going to a country for a particular job for a period of time, and end up being entrapped there. And so, there may be some questions in that regard, too. But, again, the lives that you're leading and the example that you're setting for us, the willingness to come here and go right back to other work is deeply appreciated.

I don't know if either one of you, this is rather an informal hearing, wish to say anything in closing, but you're welcome too, if you wish.

KUTCHER:

I just want to say thank you. As I mentioned before, this is one of the greatest honors in my life. And I know the work that you all do is stricken with conflict and headlines that dominate your time and pull you in directions that oftentimes you don't even want to go. But to really care about ending slavery, if you really care about doing the right thing here, we all realize that there will be negative repercussions of our actions.

And I think the biggest thing that I got out of being here today, I got reminded of a story a friend of mine told me about a rabbi who was asked to explain the Torah all standing on one leg and he said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself, everything else is just commentary."

MASSIMINO:

Thank you.

I also want to say thank you so much to you, in particular, Mr. Chairman, who really have put this issue on the map in the United States Congress in a way that it has never been before. And now, using that awareness, that growing awareness that we all have to and modern slavery. You know, I think it was Senator McCain who said this is not a pretty topic, and a lot of people, particularly Americans don't like to think about it, don't want to talk about it, and would rather pretend that it doesn't exist, and particularly don't want to see the ways in which we are all complicit in this problem.

So, you have made that harder for people. And I want to thank you and all the members of the committee who have done so much to make people uncomfortable about this issue. And that's where it starts. So, thank you very much.

CORKER:

Thank you both, you've been outstanding. We're going to cross, walk across the hall I think and view how some of this that you have developed work so well. We thank you for that. The meeting is adjourned.