

PRESS RELEASE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

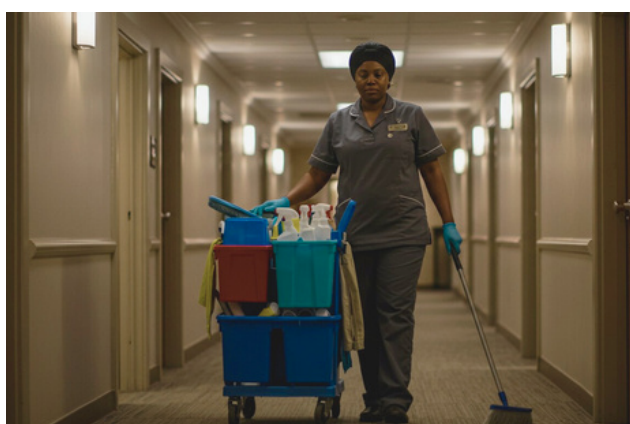
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ADVOCATE, PUBLIC OFFICIALS, AND SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING CALL FOR URGENT PROTECTIONS FOR WORKERS DURING LA'S POST-FIRE RECOVERY.

Los Angeles, CA - On Thursday, February 27, 2025, at 1pm, a press conference was held in front of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' building to shed light on the urgent need to prevent labor trafficking and exploitation in the wake of the recent LA fires. As city and county residents recover from this devastating destruction, it is critical to protect labor rights and implement strong protections in order to prevent human trafficking during the rebuilding efforts.

The [link](#) between natural disasters and increased risk of human trafficking is well-documented, as crises like the recent fires create vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. It is imperative that we reduce the risk of trafficking by addressing the sudden economic hardship, job losses, housing instability, and worsening living conditions that make individuals more susceptible to forced labor and exploitation. Immigrants, undocumented workers, women, children, and other individuals at these intersections face an even higher risk. Systemic barriers, including a lack of legal protections, language access, and fear of retaliation, further prevent them from seeking help or reporting abuse.

Speakers at the event included lived experts with policy expertise, nonprofit and advocacy organizations, public officials, labor rights advocates, and impacted workers. Together, they brought awareness to the intersection of natural disasters and human trafficking, working to find solutions for preventing exploitation as we rebuild and recover from the fires.



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LIST OF SPEAKERS

LA City Council Member

Hugo Soto-Martinez

Member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Hilda Solis

Health Deputy, Jazmin Garcia-Delgadillo

Office of LA County District Attorney

Deputy-in-Charge, Ryann Jorban, Esq.

LA County Department of Consumer & Business Affairs, Office of Immigrant Affairs

Executive Director, Rigo Reyes

LA County Department of Consumer & Business Affairs, Office of Labor Equity

Deputy Director, Rose Basmadzhyan, Esq.

Office of LA County Counsel

Deputy County Counsel, Joseph Mellis, Esq.

Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC)

Executive Director, Chancee Martorell

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Equity Alliance

Executive Director, Manjusha Kulkarni, Esq.

Asian Pacific Islander Human Trafficking Task Force

Co-Chair, Panida Rzonca, Esq.

Bet Tzedek Legal Services

Vice President of Legal Programs, Mary Tanagho Ross, Esq.

Bet Tzedek Legal Services

Interim Director of the Employment Rights Project, Matt DeCarolis, Esq.

Loyola Law School Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative

Director, Stephanie Richard, Esq.

Impacted Communities

POWERFUL INSIGHTS & EXPERTISE FROM SPEAKERS

"I am deeply committed to ensuring we address human trafficking by prioritizing prevention, supporting survivors, and holding traffickers accountable for their actions."

Hilda L. Solis, Los Angeles County Chair Pro Tem and Supervisor for the 1st District

"The District Attorney's Office stands here today with our partners, united in our commitment to protect these essential workers. We understand the challenges they face, and we pledge to use every legal tool at our disposal to ensure their rights are upheld."

Ryann Jorban, Deputy-in-Charge, LA County District Attorney's Office

"Our communities are facing a very vulnerable time as they recover from the devastation of the wildfires. We must remember that every person — regardless of their origin or immigration status — deserves safety and the opportunity to heal and rebuild their lives without fear."

Rigo Reyes, Executive Director, LA County Department of Consumer & Business Affairs, Office of Immigrant Affairs

"Just as we've demonstrated in past enforcement efforts, we are committed to collaborating with our partners to combat worker exploitation during disaster recovery. The principle is clear: Honest work deserves fair pay. When bad actors violate this standard, we will hold them accountable to the fullest extent of the law."

Rose Basmadzhyan, Esq., Deputy Director, LA County Department of Consumer & Business Affairs, Office of Labor Equity

"Evidence Based Data clearly shows the link between human trafficking and natural disasters. Los Angeles as it begins to rebuild from the fires must raise awareness and take steps to prevent this well documented abuse before it occurs."

Stephanie Richard, Director, Loyola Law School, Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative

"As Los Angeles struggles to rebuild from the devastating wildfires, let it be an equitable and just recovery whereby we avoid the pitfall of building as quickly as possible and not ensure checks on environmental and labor protections. As social justice organizations, we must band together to demand a just and equitable recovery protecting workers, residents, local businesses and the environment and build a stronger, more resilient and sustainable community."

Chancee Martorell, Executive Director, Thai Community Development Center

"Bet Tzedek will work to ensure that workers are not exploited as our city rebuilds and will relentlessly seek justice on behalf of workers and survivors in cases of human trafficking."

Mary Tanagho Ross, Esq., Vice President of Legal Programs, Bet Tzedek Legal Services

"As our Angelo Community rebuilds, we must be vigilant against the scourge of human trafficking and labor exploitation. It takes all of us to be the eyes and ears to speak out against trafficking and exploitation. Workers should feel secure in seeking assistance if they experience trafficking, because they are not alone."

Matt DeCarolis, Esq., Interim Director of Employment Rights Project, Bet Tzedek Legal Services

"Wildfires and other natural disasters leave too many Angelenos vulnerable to exploitation and labor trafficking, stripping them of homes, jobs, and vital support. LA County is taking a proactive, public health approach to stop trafficking before it starts. We are committed to strong prevention measures now and a resilient response framework for the future as we work through the County's Office of Labor Equity and our regional partners."

Holly J. Mitchell, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor for the 2nd District

PRESS CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS & MEDIA CONTACTS

Thai Community Development Center

The mission of Thai CDC is to advance the social and economic well-being of low- and moderate-income Thais and other ethnic communities in the greater Los Angeles area through a broad and comprehensive community development strategy including human rights advocacy, affordable housing, access to healthcare, promotion of small businesses, neighborhood empowerment, and social enterprises.

Media Contact: Chancee Martorell, Executive Director | chancee@thaicdc.org

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Equity Alliance

AAPI Equity Alliance is a coalition of over 40 community-based organizations serving the diverse needs of the 1.6 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County and beyond. It is dedicated to improving the lives of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through civic engagement, capacity building, and policy advocacy.

Media Contact: Tina Pham, Senior Communications Specialist | tpham@aapiequityalliance.org

Asian Pacific Islander (API) Human Trafficking Task Force

The Asian Pacific Islander Human Trafficking Task Force (APIHTTF) of AAPI Equity Alliance aims to serve Asian and Pacific Islander (API) victims of human trafficking and to raise awareness of human trafficking in the API communities.

Bet Tzedek Legal Services

Bet Tzedek is an internationally recognized force in economic and social justice, and one of the largest nonprofit legal aid organizations in Los Angeles County. Since 1974, it has provided free legal assistance to eligible low-income residents regardless of their immigration status.

Media Contact: Belinda Cai, Communications Lead | bcai@bettzedek.org

LA County Department of Consumer & Business Affairs, Office of Immigrant Affairs and & Labor Equity (OLE)

Since 1975, the County of Los Angeles Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) has been the local consumer protection agency serving County consumers, tenants, homeowners, immigrants, and workers. DCBA provides a wide range of services that aim to foster a fair and dynamic marketplace and enhance the economic wellbeing of our communities. This includes investigating consumer fraud complaints, enforcing the County's minimum wage, tenant and worker protections, and providing access to justice programs. More information can be found at dcba.lacounty.gov.

Media Contact: Sandra Rodriguez, Senior Public Information Specialist | communications@dcba.lacounty.gov

Loyola Law School, Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative (SJI)

SJI is a practitioner-led, survivor-informed, evidence-based, and community-informed think tank that intentionally fills gaps in human trafficking through an intersectional framework that fosters systemic change and progressive policy innovations.

Media Contact: Sabra Boyd, SJI, Media Relations Director | sabra.boyd@lls.edu