

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 8, 2014

Mr. Robert W. Runcie
Superintendent of Schools
Broward County Public Schools
600 SE Third Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

Dear Superintendent Runcie:

We write to bring to your attention an issue of deep concern that threatens the safety and well-being of young people living in South Florida: human trafficking. This reprehensible crime is taking place right in our community, with children an average of 12 years old entering prostitution. Parents, educators, law enforcement, social service providers, and local officials must work together to prevent human trafficking in our schools through education and help victims break the cycle of coercion.

According to the Broward Human Trafficking Coalition (BHTC), the leading non-profit agency in Broward County committed to addressing human trafficking, 77 percent of children trafficked from January to April 2014 were community children. Furthermore, as members of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, we were particularly troubled to learn that 23 percent of children trafficked were dependent children (in foster care).

Sadly, the majority of human trafficking victims are underserved young persons who are least likely to receive the treatment and care that they need. Of those trafficked in Broward County, the Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO), Child Protective Investigations Section (CPIS), and Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) report that:

- 77 percent of children have a Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) delinquent history;
- 87 percent of children have a runaway history;
- 83 percent of children have current substance/alcohol abuse history; and
- 83 percent of children have a prior abuse history.

We have a responsibility as a community to protect our most vulnerable. No young person should have to experience the emotional and physical trauma of abuse, including trafficking and other coercive practices. We must do more to prevent students from becoming victims through early intervention, and linking to support services when necessary.

As we are sure you will agree, it is of the utmost importance that we get parents, educators, and the entire community involved in the prevention of sexual abuse and trafficking. Please join us in moving the discussion forward on how we can best address this alarming issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alcee L. Hastings".

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Theodore E. Deutch".

Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie Wasserman Schultz".

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lois Frankel".

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress