

AG Healey's office hosts first ever Human Trafficking Summit to provide tools and information to help address human trafficking in Massachusetts

This week, Attorney General Maura Healey hosted the office's first Human Trafficking Summit, a two-day conference to provide attendees with tools and information to help address human trafficking in Massachusetts.

The summit, held during Human Trafficking Prevention Month, brought together more than 200 law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and victim advocates who investigate and prosecute human trafficking cases, along with direct service providers from organizations across Massachusetts.

During her opening remarks to kick off the event on Thursday, AG Healey highlighted how the summit provides an opportunity for attendees to build strong connections across jurisdictions and disciplines, develop new skills, share best practices, and meet partners across the state all dedicated to the same goal of combatting human trafficking in Massachusetts.

"Human trafficking knows no barriers," said Healey. "It's in suburban, rural, and urban communities, and affects people of all walks of life. This summit brings together hundreds of professionals across our state who are working to combat this crime, build strong connections and discuss new approaches to this important work."

After AG Healey's remarks, Audrey Morrissey, Associate

Director and National Survivor Leadership Director of My Life My Choice, delivered remarks. My Life My Choice is a survivor-led program fighting to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Audrey Morrissey has helped develop survivor-led programs to protect vulnerable girls and co-authored an exploitation prevention curriculum that is used in 27 states.

“It is unprecedented in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to bring together so many law enforcement, district attorneys and service providers,” said Audrey Morrissey, My Life My Choice Associate Director and National Survivor Leadership Director. “At My Life My Choice, we are so grateful for the Attorney General’s leadership. And as a survivor, I am so moved that folks are coming together to better serve victims of the commercial sex industry who still don’t know there is a way out.”

On Thursday morning, the summit opened with a panel on “Perspectives on Connecting with Survivors,” moderated by Lisa Goldblatt Grace, Co-founder and Director of My Life My Choice, and will close on Friday afternoon with a panel on “Moving Forward Together – Innovations that Advance our Practice,” moderated by Amy Farrell, Associate Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Northeastern University.

On Friday morning, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito opened the second and last day of the summit with welcoming remarks. Lt. Governor Polito serves as the Chair of the Governor’s Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence and has successfully worked to support effective implementation of key provisions of Chapter 260: An Act Relative to Domestic Violence, including the expansion of protections for victims of human trafficking.

“I am proud of the work that the Governor’s Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence has undertaken in its goals to combat human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation throughout the Commonwealth,” said Lt. Governor

Karyn Polito. "The Council's efforts, including recently securing \$1.5 million in federal grant funding to strengthen support for individuals and families, in tandem with today's summit and our ongoing collaboration with the Attorney General's Office, advocates and stakeholders, is critical to the enhanced protections and continued resources for survivors."

Through the Council, in April 2016, Lt. Governor Polito announced new policies to target human trafficking, which included the formation of a High-Risk Victims Unit within the Massachusetts State Police (MSP), and improved interagency coordination and communication between MSP and the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Additionally, as a part of the Baker-Polito Administration's reforms at DCF, sexual exploitation and trafficking are now reportable conditions regardless of whether the perpetrator is a caregiver.

The administration also secured \$1.5 million in federal grant funding focused on strengthening supports for survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, which will help build upon the foundation established by the five-year Massachusetts Child Welfare Trafficking Grant secured by the Justice Resource Institute in 2014. Governor Baker also signed Executive Order 568 "Establishing Zero Tolerance Policy for Human Trafficking and Related Activities."

Throughout the Attorney General's summit, various District Attorney's Offices, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the AG's Office presented several human trafficking case studies, including cases involving minors, illegal massage businesses, and sex buyer stings. Special sessions covered issues including promoting men's accountability to end commercial sexual exploitation, labor trafficking, search warrants and digital analysis in human trafficking cases, and the intersection of addiction and sexual exploitation.

AG Healey's Human Trafficking Division focuses on policy, prevention and prosecution and includes a team of specialized prosecutors, victim advocates and MSP troopers who handle high impact, multi-jurisdictional human trafficking investigations and prosecutions across the state.

Through the Human Trafficking Division, the AG's Office has charged more than 60 individuals in connection with human trafficking since the anti-trafficking law was passed.

The AG's Office has also filed legislation to close a loophole that has exempted businesses that act as fronts for human trafficking from state oversight by adding bodyworkers, bodywork therapy and bodywork facilities and schools to the current state licensing structure.

In October 2019, the AG's Office secured a \$1.7 million in federal grants to build on the AG's work to investigate and prosecute human trafficking and provide comprehensive, trauma-informed services to victims.

A list of participating agencies and organizations in this summit include:

- Amirah Inc.
- Anchor Ministries
- Athol Police Department
- Bags of Hope Ministries
- Barnstable Police Department
- Berkshire District Attorney's Office
- Boston Police Department
- Boston University Law School
- Braintree Police Department
- Bristol District Attorney's Office
- Brookline Police Department
- Burlington Police Department
- Cape and Islands District Attorney's Office
- Center for Health Impact

- Children's Advocacy Center of Bristol County
- Children's Advocacy Center of Suffolk County
- Massachusetts Department of Children and Families
- Easton Police Department
- Essex District Attorney's Office
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
- Fall River Police Department
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Franklin County Sheriff's Office
- Garden of Hope
- Governor's Council on Sexual and Domestic Violence
- Hampden District Attorney's Office
- Hampden County Sheriff's Department
- Harvard Medical School
- Homeland Security
- Justice Resource Institute
- Lakeville Police Department
- Living in Freedom Together (LIFT)
- Lowell Police Department
- Malden Police Department
- Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
- Massachusetts State Police
- MGH Substance Use Disorder Bridge Clinic
- Middlesex District Attorney's Office
- MOVA
- New Bedford Police Department
- Norfolk District Attorney's Office
- Northeastern University
- Northwestern District Attorney's Office
- Norwood Police Department
- Pittsfield Police Department
- Plymouth District Attorney's Office
- Procopio Consultants
- Revere Police Department
- RIA House
- Roxbury Youthworks Inc.
- Sojourner House

- Suffolk District Attorney's Office
- Suffolk County House of Corrections
- Suffolk County Sheriff's Department
- Swansea Police Department
- Taunton Police Department
- The COVE
- The EVA Center
- U.S. Attorney's Office
- Wilmington Police Department
- Woburn Police Department
- Worcester District Attorney's Office
- Worcester Police Department
- Yarmouth Police Department
- YWCA of Western Massachusetts