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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Schimel Announces New Human Trafficking Bureau

MADISON, Wis. – Today, Attorney General Brad Schimel announced the establishment of the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Human Trafficking Bureau. In a statewide assessment, Wisconsin law enforcement in nearly every county in the state reported that human trafficking occurs in their community. Recognizing this growing problem, the bureau will develop a coordinated statewide strategy to identify, target, and prosecute traffickers in order to combat human trafficking and provide needed assistance to survivors.

“Human trafficking is an insidious crime that affects victims in small and large communities, rural and urban,” said Attorney General Schimel. “The DOJ Human Trafficking Bureau will be a resource to communities all across the state in the fight to stop human trafficking and to protect the victims who have been coerced and extorted into sex and labor work.”

Staffed by one special agent in charge and six special agents from the DOJ Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), the bureau will promote public safety through proactive enforcement, specialized training, and community outreach. Already, the bureau has begun coordinating investigative efforts throughout the state.

Local and regional task forces to fight human trafficking already exist in some parts of Wisconsin, and the bureau will work with these task forces to support victims and to provide specialized training. The bureau will also institutionalize human trafficking identification and investigation among other related investigative groups, such as narcotics, violent crime, and financial crimes.

“We are excited and encourage by the efforts of Attorney General Schimel with the new formation of the DOJ Human Trafficking Bureau,” said Brown County Sheriff’s Lieutenant Jim Valley. “We know that the partnership with the DOJ and the Brown County Sheriff’s Office will continue to help protect those that are victimized by this crime. We are confident that the added enforcement will promote change and help identify and stabilize victims.”

The bureau will also work with the legislature on policies that support greater law enforcement coordination and enhanced victim services to help disrupt and dismantle human trafficking operations in Wisconsin. This work has already begun as the bureau is currently working with Senators Dan Feyen, Devin LeMahieu and Van Wanggaard and Representatives Andre Jacque and Joel Kleefisch on Assembly Bills [389](#), [400](#), [435](#), and [486](#).

“Our state has become a hub for human trafficking which is simply unacceptable,” said Sen. Dan Feyen. “I applaud DOJ for opening a bureau to specifically address the issue and look forward to further collaboration between the legislature and agency to protect Wisconsin’s most vulnerable.”

“The act of selling people and trafficking humans is abhorrent,” said Rep. Joel Kleefisch. “Unfortunately, Wisconsin is a national hub. We appreciate the Attorney General’s effort to stop at nothing to end this deplorable practice.”

The bureau was created through a reorganization of DCI, which will allow for a more efficient flow of critical investigative information, and will not increase DCI’s budget. The bureau will include the Internet Crimes Against Children Bureau and the Digital Forensic Unit, as the work of these units often overlaps with human trafficking investigations. Also, an existing, vacant special agent position was reassigned to create the special agent in charge position to lead the bureau.

The fight against human trafficking is a fight that requires a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach. In 2015, DOJ and the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) implemented the Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force. Since its inception, the task force has been developing a cross-system, trauma-informed service and response systems for minors who have been trafficked or are at-risk of being trafficked.

DOJ encourages both rural and urban public agency executives and business owners, particularly those in the hospitality and service industries, to download and display anti-human trafficking posters. The posters can be [downloaded at no cost online](#). For more information about human trafficking in Wisconsin, and how you can help victims and end the demand, go to www.BeFreeWisconsin.com.