

Senate Majority Policy Committee Hearing  
Thursday, January 11, 2024

Kara Templeton, Deputy Secretary of Driver and Vehicle Services, PennDOT

Good afternoon, Chair Laughlin, and members of the Senate Majority Policy Committee. My name is Kara Templeton, and I am the Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). On behalf of Secretary Mike Carroll, I would like to thank you for inviting me to testify on such an important topic.

Where there is transportation, there is the potential for human trafficking. This modern-day form of slavery affects every city, suburb, and rural area in the United States, as traffickers claim close to 25 million victims globally and generate \$150 billion annually. The transportation industry is uniquely positioned to combat human trafficking in a variety of ways, including helping survivors escape their traffickers.

Human trafficking is a multi-faceted issue, and its complexity makes it difficult for any single agency to address and lead preventative work fully. In Pennsylvania, numerous government agencies, private partners, and nonprofit entities take an active role in preventing human trafficking and providing resources to survivors.

PennDOT was one of the first transportation agencies in the country to train employees to recognize the signs of a potential human trafficking situation and how to report the situation to authorities. PennDOT continually trains our approximately 1,650 Driver License Center employees and all staff members at the state's 14 Welcome Centers on the signs of potential trafficking. In addition, we work with Pennsylvania Training Resource and Information Network to offer human trafficking awareness training and discussion sessions for the transit industry across the Commonwealth. This training is offered virtually and in person at Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association's Annual Conference.

PennDOT displays posters for reporting suspected human trafficking and for seeking help from a human trafficking situation throughout the customer service areas and bathrooms of our Driver License Centers. Human trafficking awareness posters and mirror clings are also displayed in all PennDOT rest areas and welcome center bathrooms. Across our 75 Driver License Centers, we have 229 screens that run human-trafficking awareness videos for 30-60 seconds each and hold 10-second still image content on the screens. This rotation of videos and content occurs four times every hour. With an average of 2,300 customers per hour, we have a total of 18,700 customers a day who are exposed to human-trafficking awareness messaging at our Driver License Centers. Human trafficking awareness messaging is also displayed once every three to four minutes – in both English and Spanish – on the informational screens at all PennDOT Welcome Centers.

All new and existing commercial driver's license holders who visit any of our Driver License Centers receive wallet cards from Truckers Against Trafficking, which contain information on the signs of trafficking and how to report it to authorities. Additionally, PennDOT's Commercial Driver's Manual contains a full page of Truckers Against Trafficking information.

In July 2022, PennDOT reestablished the Human Trafficking Interagency Workgroup, which was active prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The workgroup comprises numerous sibling agencies and advocacy groups that meet bimonthly to share resources, discuss best practices, and organize human trafficking prevention and awareness efforts. Such a workgroup helps to ensure we have a coordinated response that minimizes duplicative efforts and efficiently utilizes resources.

PennDOT participates in multi-agency press events every January in conjunction with National Human Trafficking Awareness Month. We also share information about human trafficking awareness on social media throughout the year.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and discuss this with you today. We all must understand our responsibility to raise awareness on this topic. I look forward to continuing this important conversation and welcome any questions.