



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Task Force on Enhancing Security for Special Events in the United States Ranking Member Nellie Pou (D-NJ)

A Scourge Against Humanity: Addressing Human Trafficking at Mass Gatherings

December 17, 2025

Human trafficking often is overlooked or ignored in the United States. Chairman McCaul, I know that you have worked to combat trafficking, particularly through your leadership in authorizing the Blue Campaign at the Department of Homeland Security, which has saved countless lives.

Bringing attention and resources to combat human trafficking has been a longtime priority for me as well. In the New Jersey state legislature, I led legislation that broadened the definition of trafficking, increased penalties for perpetrators, and provided support for victims. We must do everything possible to prevent individuals from being trafficked and fully prosecute those who commit trafficking crimes.

Earlier this year I co-led bipartisan legislation with Congressman Guest that strengthens our ability to stop drug and human trafficking abroad. The House passed that measure and now we need the Senate to act. Today's hearing is another opportunity to discuss that and other policies we can implement to prevent trafficking at some of the largest events in our nation's history. In the coming years, we will welcome people from all around the world for the World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic games. This is particularly exciting for me as our district in northern New Jersey will host the World Cup final.

The threat environment for human trafficking will become more and more complex. There will be criminals who traffic and enslave laborers. And criminals will sell cheap merchandise made using slave labor from foreign countries. World Cup matches will be spread across three different countries, and our country will host games in 11 different cities. That means that people will be traveling and constantly moving, giving traffickers cover for their illegal and sick behavior. Now is the time to be proactive.

We have to make sure that our Federal, state and local partners are trained in how to recognize the signs of human trafficking and forced labor trafficking and are equipped with the resources needed to halt these threats. I am concerned that personnel at DHS, including at the Center for Countering Human Trafficking and Homeland Security Investigations, are being reassigned to other priorities outside of human trafficking and child sexual exploitation investigations.

As Members of Congress we have a responsibility to raise public awareness on human trafficking. This hearing is a good step in that direction. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on the frontlines.

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