

The Exodus Road and the Office of Sen. Michael Bennet Bolster Colorado Anti-Trafficking Efforts at Roundtable Event

Anti-trafficking leaders from across Colorado gathered on National Human Trafficking Awareness Day to discuss next steps in the fight to end human trafficking.

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO, UNITED STATES, January 12, 2024

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Colorado-based anti-trafficking nonprofit, [The Exodus Road](#), in coordination with the offices of U.S. Sens. Michael Bennet (D-Colo) and John Hickenlooper (D-Colo), hosted a counter-trafficking event on January 11, National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. The roundtable event brought together leaders in anti-human trafficking work from across Colorado to discuss and enhance efforts across the state.



The Exodus Road, in coordination with the office of Sen. Michael Bennet, hosted a roundtable event for Colorado anti-trafficking leaders.

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Hosted at The Penrose House Conference Center, the event, “United Against Human Trafficking: Strengthening Colorado's Response through Collaboration and Innovation,” focused on the “3 P's” of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act – Prevention, Prosecution, and Protection. Attendees discussed identifying gaps in existing strategies and the effective approaches each organization has found

in combating human trafficking in Colorado.

Experts, policymakers and law enforcement attended the event, including representatives from the offices of both Sen. Bennet and Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-Colo); Bill Woolf, recipient of the Presidential Medal for Extraordinary Efforts to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the former Acting Director for the U.S. Office for Victims of Crime; Danielle Summerville, the Cultural and Community Outreach Programs Manager at the Colorado Springs Mayor's Office; Lt. Mark Chacon of the Colorado Springs Police Department; and, Marisol Tischman, Forensic Interview Specialist at Homeland Security Investigations.

Several anti-trafficking leaders from across Colorado brought critical perspectives and experience to the roundtable, including Maria Trujillo, the Human Trafficking Program Manager at the Colorado Department of Public Safety; Dr. AnnJanette Alejano-Steele (AJ), the Co-founder and Research Director at the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking; JoAnn O'Neil, Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Human Trafficking Task Force of Southern Colorado; Sues Hess, the Executive Director for Reclaiming Hope; Bailey Thiry, the Human Trafficking Program Manager for TESSA; Donna D'Amico, board member of the HT Task Force of Southern Colorado; and, Sara Potter with Peak Vista Community Health Centers.

Additionally, there were three significant virtual attendees representing the Western Slope, Pueblo and Denver. Laura Parker, the CEO and Co-founder of The Exodus Road, was joined by several team members from the nonprofit to facilitate the event and provide additional experience.

Among several points, the roundtable discussion emphasized the necessity for training and education to combat human trafficking from law enforcement's investigation of labor-trafficking crimes to digital safety and prevention for kids, parents and schools. As an example, The Exodus Road's [INFLUENCED](#) program was highlighted.

The nonprofit recently launched INFLUENCED - a prevention education curriculum to help parents and teens identify and avoid online exploitation. In 2022, more than 76% of The Exodus Road's successfully closed investigations worldwide involved evidence of exploitation on digital platforms, namely social media. Protecting children in this digital age requires an increased understanding by parents, teachers, public officers, and other community leaders regarding the tactics and mechanisms traffickers use to target and groom kids online.

"Human trafficking is a prolific human rights crisis that is underreported in most communities and must be addressed right here in Colorado," Parker said. "We are so grateful for Senator Bennet's and Senator Hickenlooper's commitment to combat human trafficking in our state and for their efforts in creating this collective of anti-trafficking advocates. Our ability to eradicate human trafficking is exponentially greater in collaboration."

After the event, the participating anti-trafficking leaders across the state are invited to continue collaborating through workshop groups diving deeper into the issues discussed. Key workshop

topics include Victim-Witness support, Policy Support for Survivors, and Legal Framework and Challenges in the Prosecution of Traffickers.

About Senator Michael Bennet

Michael Bennet has represented Colorado in the United States Senate since 2009. Widely recognized as a pragmatic and independent thinker, he is driven by a deep-seated obligation to create more opportunity for the next generation. Michael has built a reputation of taking on Washington dysfunction and working with Republicans and Democrats to address our nation's greatest challenges – including education, climate change, immigration, health care, and national security.

About The Exodus Road

The Exodus Road is a global nonprofit disrupting the darkness of modern-day slavery by partnering with law enforcement to fight human-trafficking crime, equipping communities to protect the vulnerable and empowering survivors as they walk into freedom. Working side-by-side with local staff, NGO partners and law enforcement around the world, The Exodus Road fights to liberate trafficked individuals, arrest traffickers and provide restorative care for survivors. Since its founding in 2012, the organization has assisted police in the rescue of 2,400 survivors and the arrests of more than 1,200 offenders, numbers that grow almost daily. The Exodus Road's approach to freedom incorporates intervention, training and education, and aftercare efforts.

In training and education, The Exodus Road offers a suite of online and in-person curriculums including: TraffickWatch: Brazil, an online training curriculum specifically designed for law enforcement partners; INFLUENCED, a curriculum equipping United States parents and teens to participate in the online world while avoiding the dangers of exploitation; and Equip and Empower, a human trafficking prevention education curriculum for at-risk youth in Thailand. Cumulatively, the organization has trained more than 27,000 officers and citizens through their educational curriculums.

The Exodus Road combats human trafficking in the U.S., Thailand, the Philippines, India, Brazil and in another undisclosed, Latin American country. The nonprofit was founded in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 2012, and still calls the city home for the U.S. office.

For additional information or to make a donation to help stop human trafficking, please visit The Exodus Road's website at <https://theexodusroad.com/>, and check them out on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

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