



NC Human Trafficking Commission: General Meeting
Thursday, April 24, 2025, 10:00 AM – 11:46 AM
WebEx through the NC Judicial Center / Dogwood Conference Room
(B1-1184B)

10:00 AM – Call to Order, Ethics Statement, & Introduction of Judge Stephanie Reese

Maggie Brewer

Chair Brewer opened the meeting and called to order. She then read the required ethics statement and introduced Judge Stephanie Reese.

10:01 AM – Roll Call Attendance & Approval of the Minutes: 2/27/2025

Maggie Brewer

Chair Brewer conducted a verbal roll call to document attendance. Commissioners in attendance at the meeting were Maggie Brewer, Caitlin Brooks, Jennifer Haigwood, Dean Duncan on behalf of Dawn Ferrer, Simone Gilchrist on behalf of Kindl Detar (joined 10:03 am), Dr. Corinna Myers, Tina Pennington (left 11:15 am), Captain Jordan Reese, Judge Stephanie Reese (stepped out for hearing), Lillie Rhodes (joined 10:04 am), Aaron Jacobson on behalf of Caitlin Ryland (joined 10:01 am), and DA Billy West (joined 11:00 am). Also in attendance were Commission Executive Director, Christine Long, and staff. Members of the public were also able to view or listen to the meeting via WebEx.

Chair Brewer asked if there were changes to the minutes from February 27th, 2025, meeting. No changes were noted. Commissioner Haigwood made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Brooks seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

10:05 AM – Commission Business: Discussion on Working Groups and Committees

Maggie Brewer

The Chair started the discussion on working groups and committees. The goal is to revamp some of our current committees and develop additional working groups to help the commission with different requests and inquiries like reviewing training materials, technology and artificial intelligence, etc. Christine and Maggie welcome any commissioners interested in helping head a workgroup or committee or sharing ideas about what we might need.

10:09 AM – General Updates:

Maggie Brewer

- **NC SBI**

Assistant Director Steven Holmes

Chair Brewer introduced Assistant Director Steven Holmes to provide updates on the State Bureau of Investigation. Director Holmes talked about three general areas of SBI activities: investigative, administrative, and collaborative. From an investigative standpoint, some indicators/trends seen recently have been survivors being denied pay, being threatened and assaulted, cases involving missing persons, and across multiple jurisdictions. From an administrative standpoint, the SBI posted positions for a grant coordinator and an intelligence analyst. From a collaborative standpoint, the SBI is working with the Buffet Foundation and their investigative liaisons, Safe Alliance, the Conference of District Attorneys, the Fusion Center, and more.

- **NC DOL (hotel and lodging)**

Jennifer Haigwood, Commissioner

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Chair Brewer gave the floor to Commissioner Jennifer Haigwood with the Department of Labor. Jennifer gave an update on Session Law 2024-26 that requires accommodation facilities front-facing staff to take human trafficking awareness courses. The legislation takes effect on July 1 and tasked with the DOL with vetting and approving the training options, in addition to a few other responsibilities. The training options have been selected, and the DOL is now creating a page on their website that will list the different options in addition to a few other things related to this legislation. They hope to have the page up in May.

- **NC Highway Patrol**

Sergeant Mark Nales

Chair Brewer introduced Sergeant Mark Nales for an update from the State Highway Patrol. Sergeant Nales talked about the different initiatives and trainings the SHP has conducted including Interdiction for the Protection of Children. The SHP is set to schedule 5 more IPC classes this calendar year and are proud to report 100% of the SHP has been training in human trafficking awareness.

10:24 AM – Presentation: Housing Survey

Drake Gomez, Student Intern

Chair Brewer brought on Drake Gomez to present his findings on the housing survey conducted. It was a state-wide survey for organizations with human trafficking and/or housing programs. The survey was designed to assess the current housing models and support structures available, determine the state's effectiveness and capacity in providing for these victims, identify service gaps, and suggest improvements. The motivation for this study is due to the lack of information on the housing support provided to HT victims, which in some available instances contained inconsistencies and inaccuracies. The goal was to gain a clear understanding and enhance North Carolina's capacity to support victims, enabling self-autonomy and determination. Drake covered the background, methods, results, highlights, and conclusion. Most organizations do not provide HT dedicated beds, unless HT is their main focus. There is undoubtedly more work to do for HT victims, specifically for males and unaccompanied minors, people in rural locations, and victims of labor trafficking. *See power point for presentation details.*

11:04 AM – Survivor Inclusion Initiative

**Sarah Byrne, Attorney at Law
Moore & Van Allen**

Chair Brewer introduced Sarah Byrne with Moore & Van Allen to present on the Survivor Inclusion Initiative. Sarah leads the firm's human trafficking prevention and compliance practice which expanded its program several years ago to include financial inclusion support. This program provides support for victims/survivors who have experienced financial exploitation as a result of being trafficked. The financial inclusion includes three things: credit repair for survivors with poor credit status, financial literacy support, and access to safe banking through the survivor inclusion initiative. The survivor inclusion initiative is a financial access program designed to enhance access to safe banking and financial wellness to human trafficking survivors. The survivor inclusion initiative originally began in 2019 by the United Nations under a different name and developed a blueprint for the financial sector to better address human trafficking worldwide. A pilot program was launched and proved to be successful, so much so that Sarah and her colleague now focus on the program here in the U.S. to ensure that U.S. banks have the support they need to sustain this high impact program with measurable success. This initiative allows banks to serve survivors in many different ways with different financial products providing accessibility to survivors who might not have had access to banking otherwise. Sarah and her team found that the following items were key to high impact for this program: banks allowing non-documentary forms of identification, waiving credit checks, no minimum balance required, no monthly fees on accounts, waiving fees and penalties, trauma-informed service provision, trained and dedicated points of contact for survivors at each of the participating banks, specialized support with account management, and flagging as vulnerable or customers with specific needs whose accounts in order to avoid auto exits without a secondary review. Sarah shared a couple of case studies. A primary goal of the SII is to avoid retraumatization and reexploitation. This program can truly remove barriers and create access to safe banking and independence.

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11:24 AM – General Staff Report**Christine Long**

Christine began the report by directing attendees to the power point presentation. Ashley shared the trainings conducted since the last meeting as well as upcoming training and events. She talked about her grant with Governor's Crime Commission and some of the planned action items. Christine covered a few other topics providing general updates from the commission. There is an upcoming webinar that will feature a national program called Safe Place that addresses safe places for youth to go. Christine gave updates on our current grant programs and their statuses. The HTC is hosting a demo of software to help identify missing persons. We are also cohosting a conference with South Carolina in July. Organizations everywhere are feeling the federal cutbacks and experiencing reductions in staff, including the Administration for Children and Families. The Office of Trafficking in Persons plans to continue the regional meetings of southern states. The charge data handout and a short report comparing National Hotline Tips for NC given to Law Enforcement are in progress. *See power point for presentation details.*

11:40 AM – Public Comment**Maggie Brewer**

Maggie opened the floor for public comment. There were comments from the virtual chat as well as the physical meeting room.

11:46 AM – Adjournment**Maggie Brewer**

Maggie adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is Thursday, June 26th, 2025.