



**NC Human Trafficking Commission: General Meeting**  
**Thursday, February 22, 2024, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**  
**WebEx through the NC Judicial Center / Hickory Board Room (A-1-101)**

**10:01 AM – Call to Order & Roll Call Attendance**

**Maggie Brewer**

Chair Brewer opened the meeting and called to order. She then conducted a verbal roll call to document attendance. Commissioners in attendance at the meeting were Amy Auth, Caitlin Brooks, Maggie Brewer, Judge Hill (left 11:53 am), Deana Joy (joined 10:03 am), Kindl Detar, Dr. Myers, Marc Nichols, Tina Pennington, Caitlin Ryland (joined 10:16 am) Billy West (left 11:10 am) and Angelica Wind (joined 10:03 am). Also in attendance were Commission Executive Director, Christine Long, Grants Administrator, Kathy Estrada, Grant Managers, Kristen Howe and Mel Gilles, Data Manager, Ashawntee Cabello, Court Management Specialist, Ashley Tauscher, and Administrative Secretary, Lauren Amato. Members of the public were also able to view or listen to the meeting via WebEx.

**10:04 AM – Ethics Reminder**

**Maggie Brewer**

**Approval of the Minutes: 10/19/2023, 12/14/2023**

*(See Meeting Minutes 10/19/23 & 12/14/23)*

Chair Brewer read the required ethics statement. She then thanked all in attendance and asked if there were changes to the minutes from the October 19<sup>th</sup> and December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, meetings. No changes were noted. Commissioner Nichols made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner West seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

**10:05 AM – Committee Reports and Action Items**

**Maggie Brewer**

**Legislative Committee**

**Caitlin Brooks, Committee Chair**

*(See Legislative Report)*

Senate Bill 626 passed in 2023 with the help of Senator Alexander and Senator Berger’s staff. The bill expands rights to permanent no contact orders for victims of human trafficking; prohibits the denial of reduction of victims’ compensation due to conduct that occurred when the individual was being trafficking; and expands the definition of human trafficking to include “patronizes, solicits” to match the federal definition. When the budget passed in November, a fund was established for the Commission to give direct service grants across the state. It is a \$500,000 recurring annual award. The General Assembly also implemented the Pornography Age Verification Enforcement Act or the PAVE Act in 2023 which led to Pornhub’s withdrawal from North Carolina.

There was interest in another bill for 2024. We hosted nine statewide stakeholders, including Bill Woolf, in September to collaborate. Bill is working on some of that with the Senator’s office now. Sarah Byrne and her colleagues assisted with expunction corrections to help the expunction law be used more. The work on

expunctions identified the need for training on law changes within the courts. We are working with the HTI and committee members to roll out a partnered training with the courts and CODA.

**Public Health Committee**  
**Dr. Corrina Myers, Commissioner**  
*(Pending committee)*

Commissioner Myers has expressed interest in leading the committee. An initial meeting to discuss the logistics of the committee will be held.

**Appropriations Committee**  
**Angelica Wind, Committee Chair**  
**Kathy Estrada, Grants Administrator**  
*(See Appropriations Report)*

Commissioner Wind introduced Grants Administrator, Kathy Estrada, to provide the grant updates. Kathy talked about 3 grants and a few other items.

*Section 16.20 – Grants for Nonprofit Organizations Providing Services to Victims of Human Trafficking*  
There are 17 agencies in 16.20A and 16.20B with about \$2 million disbursed so far. Reports are under review and site visits are underway.

*Section 16.23 – Economic Assistance Funds for Organizations that Provide Services to Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault*  
There are 141 awards with about half the funds disbursed so far. Reports are under review.

*Section 16.21 – Competitive Grants for Nonprofit Organizations Providing Services to Victims of Human Trafficking*

This section has been the main focus in Appropriations meetings. Round 1 was released in August and closed in September. Minimum and maximum grant cap amounts were established. Applicants applied for either a 1-year or 2-year grant cycle. There were 24 applications received but only 20 scored. Round 1 is to enhance service to victims of human trafficking. Applications were scored by 8 people and one reviewer declined to score an application, citing a conflict of interest for the record. Of the 20 applications, 11 awards were approved on November 20, 2023. A little over \$2 million was awarded in round 1 which leaves a little under \$1.8 million available for round 2. The committee has adopted a baseline score to be considered for funding. The 11 agencies approved for funding are in the report. The grant manager held meetings with unfunded agencies to provide feedback and strategies to improve. All contracts have been entered, periods of performance begun, reporting packages sent out, webinars scheduled, and the first disbursement went out. The monitoring plan to satisfy NCPRO requirements has been completed as well. Round 2 was released in January and will close in March. Round 2 is to develop, strengthen or expand human trafficking victim service programs to help mitigate the increased risk of human trafficking. The grant award minimums and maximums remain the same as in round 1. An informational webinar was held.

#### *Other Updates*

A grant management system has been selected and the RFW is completed. We are working with procurement now. Site visits for sections 16.20 and 16.23 will begin mid to late March. The General Assembly reports are due for sections 16.20 and 16.21 on March 1. Senate Bill 105 requires 6 components to be included in the reports. Both reports are en route for submission approval.

**Public Safety Committee**  
**Marc Nichols, Committee Chair**

Commissioner Nichols talked about a few items. We've received great support from the Senate's office. There have been several requests and opportunities for training. He and Christine have been working with the

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Director of airports and U.S. Air Marshalls to get our message back into the airport system. A sheriff's meeting is coming up in Newbern; the plan is to tell them about human trafficking, see what we can do, and check availability for training. Commissioner Nichols introduced Brent Culbertson with the Center for Safer Schools. Brent is a connection within the schools, and it's a crucial connection because junior and senior bus stops are being targeted. Commissioner Nichols handed the report to Lt. Davis. There's an upcoming IPC class at the beginning of April at Johnston County Community College with 150 seats available. Last year they traveled quite a bit for the training; the goal is to do one training quarterly.

### **10:34 AM – Housing Trust Fund - Building Supportive Housing for Victim of Human Trafficking**

**Will Parry-Hill, NC Housing Finance Agency**

Will provided a brief introduction about the agency. The housing trust fund received a supplemental non-recurring appropriation this last budget of \$5 million in both years of the biennium for a total of \$10 million to finance housing for survivors or victims of human trafficking. Typically, this type of funding is run through a program called supportive housing development program, used with nonprofit organizations that provide services. The supportive housing development program is our nonprofit sponsors that are usually small-scale development. Financing comes in the form of a loan up to \$1.3 million dollars. It's non-amortizing, has zero percent interest, and comes in a 20- or 30-year term. There are no payments on the loan but by statute the housing trust fund must be loaned, it can't be granted. It is a secure loan that can be combined with other sources of funding. There is a lien secured against the property that protects the states investment in the property in case the property needs repurposed. It's going to function like a grant even though it is a secured loan. The housing credit program can fund things like an emergency shelter, non-congregated shelter, group home, etc. There are a lot of different models and it can take the form of different types of housing development. There is no reversion of these funds because they go in the housing trust fund. Technical assistance can be provided; other support and assistance can be provided throughout the process as well. It's required for consultants to work with organizations to do this specific type of work. There's been cases in which service providing agencies have partnered with housing non-profit organizations, too. As far as we can tell, there isn't an existing model for this yet. Anyone on the service level or trying to provide housing can reach out to NCHFA. More information can be found on their website – specifically under nonprofit organizations. The program is called supportive housing development program. This is an annual application cycle that is opening now. The housing trust fund money is more flexible than other sources of funds as there are different requirements with federal funds.

### **10:48 AM – General Staff Report**

**Christine Long**

*(See Staff Report)*

Our Court Management Specialist, Ashley Tauscher, started off the staff report. Ashley is our Governor's Crime Commission staff member that helps provide and coordinate much of the training and requests for training. She talked about the training and events conducted since the last General Commission meeting. There is an extensive list that can be found in our staff report. Some of the training courses were referred out when we couldn't fill them internally. There are several training courses and events coming up. The Resource Directory on our website has been updated. We contacted a little over 200 agencies but got responses from less than half. There are very few remaining Regional Response Teams as well. We're looking into purchasing Survey Monkey to help with updating, other projects, etc.

Administrative Secretary, Lauren Amato, provided a brief update on the 16.22 Facility Improvement Grants. There are 45 agencies extending and 26 closing. Most of the agencies have already executed the amendment for extension and received updated financial templates. We're almost out of quarter 4 and have begun receiving quarters 5 & 6. Legal sent the closing documents so can begin closing some of the grants. One agency wants to return their remaining balance and we are waiting for guidance on how to proceed. Another agency

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has gone into bankruptcy. The Office of General Counsel has taken care of that agency for us. Executive Director, Christine Long, completed the rest of the staff report. In the last state budget that passed, we were awarded recurring grant funds for direct services. The 2023-2025 appropriation will need encumbered in this fiscal year. As legal is drafting the terms and conditions, we've found some areas that may need a technical correction. The technical correction would allow the funds to be issued as 2-year grants and have spending beyond June 2024. We'd like to make these 2-year grants where agencies would be awarded up to \$50,000.00 per year for 2 years. Making the contracts 2 years instead of 1 would significantly decrease the workload required. Some funding did come for a temporary position that only lasts this biennium. The position posted in December and the position itself must end on June 30, 2025. We're working on scheduling interviews now. January is national human trafficking awareness and prevention month. We've had lots of different events and awards, and the Safehouse Project held a national conference in Charlotte. Previously, we issued annual recognitions to those going above and beyond; we've started it back this year and have already issued a couple awards. There were a ton of events happening on January 11<sup>th</sup> and throughout the month. Christine traveled to D.C. to meet with some of our bigger partners and talk with Polaris about the National Hotline Protocols in NC. The National Human Trafficking Hotline experienced a tremendous increase in call volume and had high staff turnover. They were seeing quite a delay in being able to get to calls so we discussed the hotline call volume and how we can help in NC. We've been working with them to resolve this issue and have tried several different things, for example, a separate number to call if following up on a tip, instead of calling the main hotline number. When the hotline started adding other ways to contact them other than just calling, it created different databases and a need to switch between them for information. They've been working to combine that information so there isn't a need to switch anymore. The call waits had decreased significantly in December but jumped again in January, likely due to national human trafficking awareness month. The long wait times are a state issue as well because we don't have people answering the hotline in parts of the state; if there isn't someone available or no one answers then it keeps the victims and service providers on the line longer. We plan to use our Resource Directory to see what agencies are willing to be on call for the hotline; there is a crucial need for agencies able to do 24/7 response. We're working out the vetting process with Polaris, and they have an online application available.

We hosted the Administration for Children and Families Region IV 2-day meeting in January. ACF has been meeting at least once a year since 2016. The 8 southern states participating share ideas and current projects. ACF brought in partners from the federal level including U.S. OASH and SAMHSA; they are really interested in helping us make connections in the state that help roll out health care training and protocols. Some of the topics may be of interest to the public health committee. Office on Trafficking in Persons typically attends these meetings and provides updates as well. ACF focus is starting to narrow more toward public health and child welfare. The Director of OTIP, Katherine Chon, attended the meeting and brought a few things to our attention. The first was the potential policy change with the Department of Homeland Security. It provides resources for those vulnerable to labor trafficking. The second was the mandatory laws on the federal level related to federal contractors. These include a procurement mandate for federal contractors and requirements for specific agencies to train staff. The third is OTIP shifting more to prevention; Director Chon pitched some prevention goals to consider as a state. We will be reaching out to the UNC SOG to update the Mandatory Reporting Guide to add federal mandates; for example, CPS mandatory reporting to NCMEC.

We have quite a few projects and meetings in the works. Senator Alexander connected us with the NC Rural center. While human trafficking isn't their focus, they engage with many churches across the state and help suggest different social justice projects they can take on. The plan is to connect the churches with local human trafficking specific nonprofits, if available. A survey will be conducted to have an idea of the dedicated bed count for human trafficking to help the NCFHA. Christine talked about the Child Welfare meetings she attended, recently focused on safety assessment. We are thrilled to be invited to more child welfare conversations. There are opportunities to be involved with some events they have going on. We want to build

relationships and partner more. We received a call from a healthcare entity called CareSource Summit Planning. They have been doing human trafficking summits in states and reached out to us about one they are planning to do in here August. They have an interest in partnering. We'll reach out to our DHHS partners and our public health committee to see if they can help. Illinois State Police and DHHS reached out to learn what NC was doing about trafficking. Christine provided them with Lt. Davis and SHP information because they are about to launch IPC in Illinois. They were looking to learn and get ideas, same as the Alaska Governor's Council. Christine met the Bush School of Government and Public Service (based in Texas) at the January conference. They are doing a very large study and NC is one of the three states they're looking at for how we're organizing our human trafficking efforts. The Department of Public Instruction has contracted with UNC to write the curriculum that's going to be rolled out to the schools. They want to launch this by May and asked us to review their content, but it was a very quick turnaround. Deana Joy agreed to be a secondary reviewer of the material. We may be asking for anyone else available to review. Schools need this content because there isn't any out there yet for them.

Ashley is on a 1-year Governor's Crime Commission Violence Against Women Act grant. GCC moved to a new grant management system resulting in many delays. The grant started on 10/1/2023 but the contract was signed the week of Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>. The grants system is up and running now. We previously couldn't see anything or enter reimbursements. The grant is focused on training, education, and awareness with more a specific focus on courts and court systems. There are some contracts we'll be making. We normally reapply for that grant in January, but it has not opened yet (likely due to the Grants Management System). We are waiting for GCC to issue new grant openings to reapply for this grant again.

The State Bureau of Investigation's human trafficking unit is being awarded \$9.6 million over the next five years from the Howard G Buffet foundation. We are inviting our partners to our June meeting to talk about the buffet foundation grant. The Conference of DA's and Safe Alliance are partnering with them. Safe Alliance, a Charlotte nonprofit, is receiving more than \$4 million over the next five years for human trafficking resources. An out-of-state law firm is seeing a new trend related to nurses being brought in through different immigration processes, and unfortunately there are some cases in NC. A future meeting will feature this trend to make everyone aware of it and what to do if they have victims/survivors. There are more award recognitions to come before the April meeting, too. Chair Brewer recognized Beloved Haven, an organization that was selected to receive the 2023 FBI Director's Community Leadership award for North Carolina. Beloved Haven is being recognized for a broad range of efforts including building bridges between law enforcement agencies and communities they serve, combating human trafficking, providing resources to victims, and more. This award is the principle means for the FBI to publicly recognize achievements of individuals and organizations that make extraordinary contributions to education and the prevention of crime and violence in their communities. Tina Pennington is the founder and Director of Beloved Haven. Tina and her organization are invited to a ceremony and reception at the FBI headquarters on April 19. There will be a local ceremony and reception hosted by the Pasquotank County sheriff's office on March 14 to celebrate this honor.

#### **11:42 AM – Other Business: Debt Bondage Repair Act Certificate Update**

**Kindl Detar, Commissioner**

Commissioner Detar turned it over to Natalia Botella for the update. The application was released in December and 31 organizations have been certified so far. All pertinent information related to the DBRA is now available on their website.

#### **11:48 AM – Public Comment**

**Maggie Brewer**

Commission Chair Brewer opened the floor for public comment. Danielle Carman with NCCCWYI announced 2 new human trafficking positions posting soon including a program coordinator and an administrative assistant. More information can be found on their website. Commissioner Ryland reported that her colleague

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Michael Boyd represented a farm worker survivor of trafficking in a federal case in the Eastern district of North Carolina. The case included allegations of violations of the trafficking victim's protection act. They settled the matter with the H2A labor contractor employer; the settlement includes the installation of human trafficking commission awareness posters in all of the contractor's sites in English and Spanish. Daniel Nicks with Helen Tarokic Law, a private immigration law firm, specializes in T visas and refers a lot of trafficking victims to TVAP. TVAP is having a huge funding crisis in NC in particular. Pam Strickland noted Pitt County Coalition is doing another human trafficking simulation this year. The North Carolina Demand Reduction Task Force performed a training in partnership with Wake Tech's law enforcement training program. She also mentioned the DRTF is having a conference May 1-2 at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh, NC. Commissioner Pennington apologized she was another call but was very thankful for the recognition. Jill Kearney with OneHope Refuge asked if the current grant that closes on March 8 will have a third round. Christine responded there would only be 2 according to statute. Jill also asked about ideas for funding and explained her situation.

**11:58 AM – Adjournment**

**Maggie Brewer**

Marc moved to adjourn the meeting and Kindl seconded the motion. Commission Chair Brewer adjourned the meeting. The next meeting is Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024.