

# **Trafficking Survivors Housing Act of 2021**

Assessing the Housing Needs of Survivors

*Introduced by Senators Brown, Blunt, and Durbin  
Representatives Joyce Beatty and Ann Wagner*

Human trafficking is an egregious crime that strips individuals of their freedom, creating long-term economic, health, and social barriers for survivors of both sex and labor trafficking. Traffickers often prey on young people, including young people in foster care, runaway youth, and individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability. One of the largest risk factors for human trafficking is housing instability, which makes individuals more vulnerable to exploitation. According to a recent survey, survivors reported that they were recruited into trafficking while experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. Affordable and safe housing is a vital tool in the effort to support survivors fleeing exploitation as well as those who are working to rebuild their lives.<sup>1</sup>

It is important housing options are available to address and respond to human trafficking survivors. There is a severe shortage of affordable housing nationally, and due to funding limitations, federal rental assistance reaches just one out of every four eligible households. The U.S. Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking reported that “sustainable housing is a significant issue in achieving long-term recovery and self-sufficiency for human trafficking survivors.” **A comprehensive analysis of specific housing and service needs of survivors of trafficking and a parallel review of housing availability and accessibility is needed to support survivor-informed solutions that restore dignity and provide safety and stability.**

**TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS HOUSING ACT OF 2021:** The legislation requires the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to commission a study and report on the availability and accessibility of homelessness and housing services for survivors of trafficking. The study will review the effectiveness of current policy and procedures and report on the impact of such policies on the ability to provide sustainable, affordable, and safe housing options for survivors of trafficking. Building on trauma-informed and evidence-based frameworks, the study would also assess the capacity of mainstream housing services to meet the distinct and specialized needs of both labor and sex trafficking survivors.

The goal of this bill are several: 1) building and sustaining federal, state, and local partnerships, and 2) protecting vulnerable children and youth:

- 1) **Building and Sustaining Federal, State, and Local Partnerships:** The Office for Victims on Crime (OVC) promotes community partnerships as a crucial and necessary component to provide holistic needs-based care to this population. *The Trafficking Survivors Housing Act of 2021* aims to bring together a number of federal agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to consult with victim service providers, housing and homelessness practitioners, and survivors of trafficking for the purpose of developing best practices for addressing housing and service needs for survivors and those at risk of trafficking.
- 2) **Protecting Vulnerable Children and Youth:** *The Trafficking Survivors Housing Act of 2021* adopts a survivor-led approach through specific coordination with the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. The study expands the review of available and accessible housing services to include youth in foster care and families of minor victims. This is supported by findings that indicate 41% of youth identified as sex trafficking victims were in out-of-home placements and moved around frequently.<sup>2</sup> In addition, housing was identified as the one of the most immediate and critical needs for children and youth who have experienced sex trafficking.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking-and-housing-homelessness/>

<sup>2</sup> The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice, and Research (2017). Covenant House. [https://covenanthousestudy.org/landing/trafficking/docs/Penn-Research-Results.pdf?\\_ga=2.66557358.1616089709.1510768446-189393648.1501095225](https://covenanthousestudy.org/landing/trafficking/docs/Penn-Research-Results.pdf?_ga=2.66557358.1616089709.1510768446-189393648.1501095225).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/report/resource/national-advisory-committee-report-best-practices-recommendations>