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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28, 2021

Washington State Legislature Helps Human Trafficking Survivors

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON – BEST (Businesses Ending Slavery & Trafficking) is proud to announce funding for a future statewide human trafficking awareness campaign aimed at helping victims and survivors self-identify and seek assistance, thanks to the help of state legislators and cities.

In the 2021 Legislative Session, the Washington state legislature allocated \$140,000 to BEST to combat human trafficking through job readiness services, employment opportunities and a human trafficking awareness-raising campaign. \$80,000 of the dollars are being used for the *Not Alone* campaign which will include messaging to help victims of human trafficking access help. The campaign will run during January 2022, National Human Trafficking Prevention Month.

Senator Karen Keiser (D) and Representative Tina Orwall (D) partnered with the City of SeaTac and other King County cities to spearhead the effort to fund this campaign. Sen. Keiser and Rep. Orwall represent the 33rd district which covers Seattle’s southern suburbs, including SeaTac, Des Moines, Kent, and Burien.

“Traffickers prey on vulnerable people in order to coerce free labor from them,” says Senator Karen Keiser who is a long-time champion of worker’s rights in Washington state and the chair of the Senate Labor, Commerce, and Tribal Affairs Committee. “Raising awareness of forced labor is crucial, especially among communities that have been historically excluded from conversations about fair work practices.”

“The I-5 corridor is the West Coast’s largest trafficking hub, and it runs right through our 33rd District,” said Rep. Orwall who is a social worker and the Washington House of Representative’s Speaker Pro Tempore. She has authored several bills intended to strengthen prosecution against human traffickers and provide more support for human trafficking victims and survivors. “We must find a way to reach people who are being trafficked and exploited so that they can receive the help they need to heal, and the tools and resources to build a new life.” Rep. Orwall believes that education and awareness are some of the keys to combating human trafficking in her district.

Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) is organizing the campaign. BEST is a Seattle-based nonprofit that provides human trafficking awareness training and helps survivors find employment. They ran the successful 2019 human trafficking awareness campaign in King County, which saw calls from

Washington residents to the National Human Trafficking Hotline increase by 33% over the previous year¹.

“The *Not Alone* campaign will feature the National Human Trafficking Hotline and was conceived by and designed with the consultation of experts who have lived experiences of trafficking,” says Dr. Mar Brettmann, the CEO and executive director of BEST. “Their consultation was crucial to making sure that when people in the state of Washington who are being exploited see these posters, they will recognize that there is help available for them.”

The posters will be accessible to the public at airports, bus stations, seaports and anywhere a person who is being trafficked may see them.

If your organization would like to get involved in the campaign, contact BEST at info@bestalliance.org or call (206) 905-6843.

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BEST (Businesses Ending Slavery & Trafficking) is a Seattle-based nonprofit that educates employers to prevent human trafficking and creates pathways to employment for survivors. Founded in 2012, BEST has trained more than 11,000 employers in the hotel, aviation, maritime and transportation industries to recognize and respond to human trafficking at their workplaces. In 2019, BEST launched the Safe Jobs Collaborative to connect survivors of trafficking with stable employment opportunities in King County. To date, Collaborative partners have helped more than 400 people gain employment. To learn more, visit <https://www.bestalliance.org/>.

¹ Washington State statistics 2018-2019, National Human Trafficking Hotline
<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/state/washington>