

Opening Statement of the Honorable Joseph R. Pitts
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Examining H.R. 5411, the Trafficking Awareness Training for Health Care Act
of 2014”
September 11, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Trafficking is an issue that many people believe only happens abroad, in a third world country, not in America. But trafficking is happening in our own backyard and at an alarming rate.

The United States has become one of the largest markets for trafficking with profits in the billions of dollars. As a father and a grandparent, this is alarming to know that so many women and children are at risk. Although it is important for Americans to become more aware of this issue, awareness must be accompanied by action.

I would like to commend my colleague from North Carolina, Renee Ellmers, for her concern for the women and children involved in this illegal and harmful industry and for proposing H.R. 5411, the Trafficking Awareness Training for Health Care Act of 2014.

The bill would support the development of evidence-based best practices for healthcare providers to identify and assist victims of human trafficking. Health care providers are among the few professionals who have the opportunity to interact with trafficked women and girls. Placed in this unique and critical position, health care workers require heightened skills to help these women and girls.

Health care providers can often interact with victims while they are still in captivity. One study found that 28% of trafficked women saw a health care professional while being held captive. Data shows that these victims use emergency room and health centers for their care. When providers are trained about human trafficking, they have the knowledge and skills to provide assistance that can lead to improved care and even rescue.

I would like to welcome all of our witnesses here today. We look forward to learning from your expertise and experience.

###