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### **January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month in Kansas**

TOPEKA – (December 19, 2017) – Kansas Governor Sam Brownback today proclaimed January to be Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Gov. Brownback was joined by Attorney General Derek Schmidt; Secretary Lana Gordon, Kansas Department of Labor; Secretary Gina Meier-Hummel, Kansas Department for Children and Families; Secretary Susan Mosier, M.D., MBA, FACS, Kansas Department of Health and Environment; and Secretary Joe Norwood, Kansas Department of Corrections in issuing today’s proclamation.

“I’m encouraged by the growing awareness around the scourge of human trafficking and exploitation, and we need to continue to shine light on it, because it is not a problem that’s somewhere far away, it happens right here in Kansas,” Governor Brownback said. “We will continue to shed light on this problem because the best way to combat it is to have citizens armed and aware of the signs and what to do if they suspect someone might be the victim of trafficking.”

Human trafficking is one of the largest and fastest-growing criminal industries in the world. It is based on recruiting, harboring and transporting people for the purpose of exploitation. Both sex trafficking and labor trafficking occur in Kansas and both adults and children are victims. Kansas’ location and interstate system make it a major transportation area for victims of human trafficking.

“The trafficking in persons for sexual or labor exploitation is a stain on 21<sup>st</sup> century society,” Attorney General Schmidt said. “Kansas continues to stand strong against human trafficking. The public can assist by reporting suspicious activity to the national hotline at 888-3737-888 or to local law enforcement in an emergency situation. The watchful eyes of Kansas citizens can help protect those who are vulnerable from this crime against human dignity.”

“The victims of human trafficking are often children, forced into an unthinkable world of exploitation,” said Secretary Gina Meier-Hummel. “The Kansas Department for Children and Families is fully committed to working with our partnering state agencies, law enforcement and members of the public to prevent this crime. We encourage anyone who suspects the abuse of a child, whether physical or sexual, to contact the Kansas Protection Center right away at 1-800-922-5330.”

Legislation passed earlier this year in the Kansas legislature provided for several changes in law relating to minor victims of human trafficking, strengthening enforcement efforts, discouraging demand and expanding awareness training. The measure won unanimous support in both the House of Representatives and Senate.

“Labor trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion,” said Lana Gordon, Secretary Kansas Department of Labor. “House Bill 2034 strengthened our ability to prosecute labor traffickers, but it is still a big problem. If you or someone you know is working under unfair conditions, report it.”

“Together with partners in our communities, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) raises awareness through public health education to prevent and reduce human trafficking,” said Susan Mosier, M.D., MBA, FACS, KDHE Secretary and State Health Officer.

The governor along with the attorney general’s office, DCF, KDHE, KDOC and KDOL are working together to educate Kansans about the presence of human trafficking, what to look for and how to report suspected human trafficking. Educational information is provided on the agencies’ websites.

“The KDOC is eager to pursue its service to the state in the area of human trafficking,” Secretary Joe Norwood said. “Our contact with both victims and perpetrators of human trafficking puts us on the front line in the fight against this harmful industry.”

For more information on human trafficking, go to <http://ag.ks.gov/human-trafficking> .

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