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## **Michigan Gaming Control Board raises awareness of human trafficking during National Human Trafficking Prevention Month**

DETROIT, Jan. 15, 2025 — In an effort to combat human trafficking and raise awareness about this pressing issue, the Michigan Gaming Control Board (MGCB) is highlighting the need to draw attention to National Human Trafficking Prevention Month in January. This effort is part of the Board's commitment to ensure that gambling establishments are safe environments for all patrons and employees.

U.S. law defines human trafficking as using force, fraud, or coercion to compel someone into labor, services, or commercial sex against their will. The only exception is for minors in commercial sex, where any exchange of sex for something of value is trafficking. Trafficking does not require movement across borders. It is often confused with human smuggling, which involves transportation but lacks force, fraud, or coercion.

"Human trafficking is a serious issue that affects communities nationwide, and gaming venues are increasingly becoming part of the national conversation about the ways in which traffickers may exploit vulnerable individuals," **MGCB Executive Director Henry Williams** said. "As regulators of the gaming industry, the Michigan Gaming Control Board recognizes the importance of being proactive in addressing this issue and is dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of all individuals in our casinos."

Human trafficking can affect anyone, but certain factors increase vulnerability, including recent migration, substance use, mental health issues, involvement in the child welfare system, and being a runaway or homeless youth. Traffickers often exploit these vulnerabilities to create dependency.

In Michigan, human trafficking remains a pressing concern. According to the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#), which maintains the United States' largest database on human trafficking, 254 cases—involving exploitation in various forms, including labor and sexual exploitation—were identified in 2023 that involved 506 victims, as cases can involve multiple victims. These distressing statistics underscore the urgent need for increased awareness, education, and collaboration to combat this form of exploitation.

"Traffickers often target the most vulnerable within our communities, and the hidden nature of trafficking leads to statistics that underrepresent the true nature and prevalence of this crime," said **Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Director, Elizabeth Hertel**. "MDHHS is committed to ongoing collaboration with key stakeholders, Tribal partners, and those who have

experienced trafficking to enhance the statewide systemic response to this crime and better meet the needs of those who have been trafficked.”

The MGCB remains committed to working closely with law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders to prevent and combat human trafficking within the gaming industry.

“Human trafficking can occur across many different industries, including in casinos and other gambling venues,” said **Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel**. “By learning to recognize the signs, we can all help victims break free from a life of servitude. My Department will continue to work with law enforcement, the Michigan Gaming Control Board, and other agency partners to raise awareness, provide resources to victims, and prosecute traffickers to end human trafficking in our state.”

If you or someone you know is experiencing human trafficking and is in need of support, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline by calling 1-888-373-7888, by texting 233733, or online via webchat at [humantraffickinghotline.org](https://www.humantraffickinghotline.org). The hotline operates 24/7 and help is available in 200 languages. All calls are confidential.

*Gambling in any form is for entertainment purposes only. If you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, contact the National Problem Gambling Helpline at **1-800-GAMBLER**, text 800GAM, or visit [www.1800gamblerchat.org](https://www.1800gamblerchat.org). Help is available 24/7 and is free and confidential. Michigan citizens can also visit the [Responsible Gaming page of the MGCB website](#) for information on self-exclusion programs including the Disassociated Persons List and the Internet Gaming and Sports Betting Responsible Gaming Database, and [DontRegretTheBet.org](https://DontRegretTheBet.org) for additional tools to game responsibly.*

*The Michigan Gaming Control Board shall ensure the conduct of fair and honest gaming to protect the interests of the citizens of the state of Michigan. Learn more at [Michigan.gov/MGCB](https://Michigan.gov/MGCB).*