

# A Combat to Human Trafficking

## NUR 1451 Capstone: Professional Nursing

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### History

Human trafficking is defined as “the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts or labor or services against his or her will.”<sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania has increased its rank from 7<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> nationally in two years for this matter.<sup>2</sup> Of the nation’s 606 active trafficking cases, 6% or 37 active cases were from Pennsylvania.<sup>3</sup> While 37 human trafficking cases are active, 271 cases in total were reported in Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> Nationally there were over 8,000 cases reported.<sup>5</sup>

Different factors pose higher risks to be trafficked. Those at highest risk to be trafficked are those living in poverty or are homeless, those in foster care, people of color, people a part of the LGBTQ+ community, people struggling with addiction, disabilities, or mental health issues, refugees, migrant workers, and undocumented immigrants.<sup>6</sup>

Traffickers can control their victims by threatening them or making promises to them by using their disparities and weaknesses to influence and manipulate them.<sup>7</sup> These strategies lead to the victim being unable to leave or escape from the trafficker, whether it is due to fear or dependence.

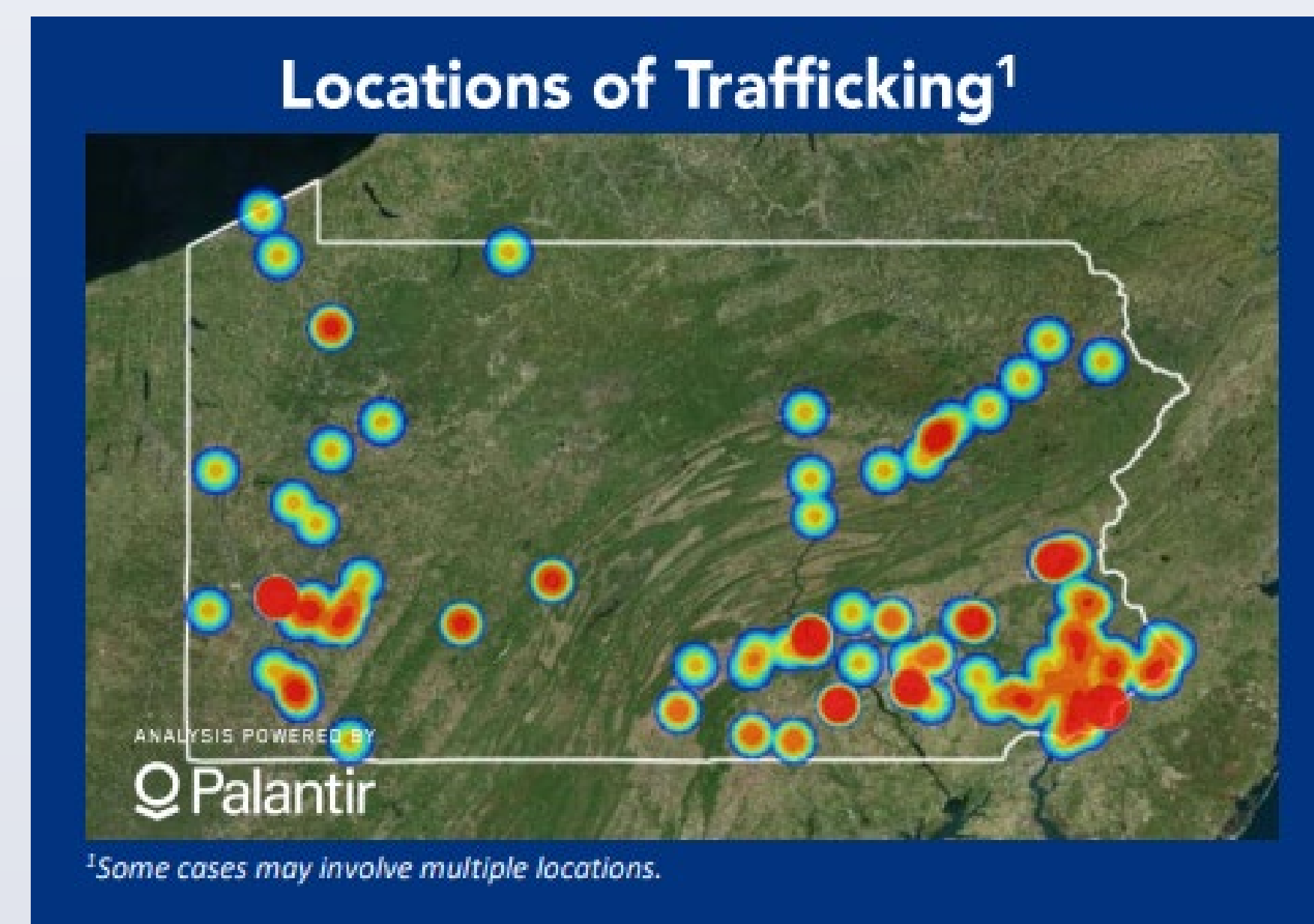
### Supporting Organizations

The Pennsylvania and the United States Departments of Transportation support fighting against human trafficking and train their employees to recognize warning signs.<sup>8</sup> The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape advocates for victims and educates individuals about trafficking.<sup>9</sup> The Freedom Network USA also works to advocate for victims, train and educate individuals, and aims to prevent trafficking from happening.<sup>10</sup> The American Hospital Association is an important organization that viciously fights trafficking and supports all hospitals endeavors to prevent it, along with providing webinars to learn about trafficking.<sup>11</sup>



### Political Issue

Human trafficking is increasing both at the national and state levels. In the US, the east coast has been impacted the greatest, but in a matter of two years, Pennsylvania has increased their ranking. Trafficking happens to adults and children of all genders, education levels, nationalities, and immigration statuses across the state and is not limited to just urbanized areas; it instead spans to all corners of the state.



Some companies and organizations like the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation have begun to train their employees on the matter,<sup>12</sup> but more can be done to prevent trafficking, educate about it, and protect the victims.

### Impact on People in Rural Pennsylvania

In rural areas, “isolation, geography, and transportation routes that facilitate human trafficking” enable it to go undetected.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the lack of economic or educational opportunities in rural areas can potentially put people at greater risk to be trafficked.<sup>14</sup>

As noted in the history, members of different socioeconomic backgrounds and communities, like living in poverty, being an immigrant, or having a disability, amongst the others mentioned, are at higher risk to be trafficked.<sup>15</sup> Members of these communities are prevalent in all areas of Pennsylvania including rural communities. Also, traffickers may use force, manipulation, and promises of romance or economic stability to lure their victims.<sup>6</sup>

### Impact on Students and Professional Nurses

Oftentimes, while victims are in captivity, healthcare providers may be the only professionals the victims can see and may be their only chance for escape.<sup>16</sup> Due to lack of recognition about human trafficking, combined with the possible fear or dependence of the victims, trafficking victims can go in and out of hospitals undetected and back to their abusers.<sup>17</sup>

Sex trafficking victims may not share their situation when they encounter a healthcare provider. Therefore, it is important that healthcare professionals be able to recognize and develop trust with victims of human trafficking. Additionally, knowing how to notify the proper authorities, to advocate for the victim’s safety is vital.

### My Proposal to Improve the Situation

To address this issue, I am proposing that a legislation is enacted to mandate a requirement for all new hires and current employees of healthcare facilities to receive training about human trafficking.

The human trafficking course should include topics about recognition, risk factors, safety practices, reporting, educating, and advocating to keep victims safe.

There are current courses available that cover these topics that are free, while others require users to pay for the course, but mostly all courses are eligible to count as continuing education credits for users.<sup>18</sup> To renew a nursing license in Pennsylvania, nurses are already required to complete 30 hours of continuing education credits, and with a human trafficking course being mandated, credits will be available to them.<sup>19</sup>

Upon receiving formal training, the goal is that more victims will be recognized by healthcare workers and more victim protection will be offered.

### Legislators

**Senator Kim Ward**  
**Majority Leader**  
**Westmoreland County**



In a statement introduced to legislation regarding human trafficking and Megan’s Law, Senator Kim Ward commented, “sex trafficking is not only dangerous, it’s dehumanizing, and has no place in 21st century society. We have to use every tool available to end it....”<sup>20</sup>

**Representative Martin Causer**  
**Majority Policy Committee**  
**Chairman**  
**67<sup>th</sup> Legislative District**



Upon meeting with Representative Martin Causer of the 67<sup>th</sup> district of PA, on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, he was thankful for more insight provided about the topic. He was supportive of healthcare providers becoming more educated on human trafficking.

### References

