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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ventura County Civil Grand Jury Announces Release of Report on Human Trafficking in Ventura County

An investigation was initiated by the 2019-2020 Ventura County Civil Grand Jury to determine if the County has a coordinated policy to address the issue of human trafficking, including funding, staffing, training and services available for victims.

Human trafficking is not just a national or state problem, it is a problem in Ventura County. Also known as modern-day slavery, human trafficking is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or sex. It is often misidentified as other crimes such as prostitution, child abuse, domestic violence, unsafe working conditions or human smuggling. The crime victim is frequently misidentified as the crime perpetrator.

The Ventura County Sheriff's Office formed the Ventura County Human Trafficking Task Force (Task Force) in January 2020 to coordinate the efforts of governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations to combat human trafficking. As part of the Task Force, Interface Children & Family Services agreed to provide victim services, training and community outreach.

The Grand Jury found that some massage parlors in the County operate as illicit sex businesses. The Grand Jury recommends the County and each of the Cities within the County coordinate their respective ordinances regarding massage parlors through the efforts of the Task Force and designate at least one employee to coordinate the investigation and enforcement of the ordinances.

The Grand Jury also found that both the Task Force and California State University Channel Islands Center for Community Engagement would benefit from a partnership through which the Task Force is helped with administrative matters and the University students are able to participate in service learning projects.

The Grand Jury also found that a significant number of indigenous Oaxacan people from Southern Mexico, live and work as agricultural laborers in the County. Many speak only their native language, Mixteco, and find it difficult to communicate with law enforcement



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and victim support services. The Grand Jury recommends the Task Force's community outreach efforts include culturally appropriate methods to engage that community.

Many victims of human sex trafficking in the County are from China and Taiwan. Individuals from China read "simplified Chinese," while individuals from Taiwan read "traditional Chinese." These two forms of written Chinese use different characters. The Grand Jury recommends the Ventura County District Attorney's Office (VCDA) provide human trafficking posters in simplified Chinese as well as traditional Chinese.

The Grand Jury concluded that the formation of the Task Force is a significant step forward in combatting both sex trafficking and labor trafficking in the County and commends each of the members of the Task Force for undertaking this concerted effort.

The public is invited to review the entire report at <https://www.ventura.org/grand-jury/fiscal-year-2019-2020/> in the Annual Reports tab in "Fiscal Year 2019-2020."

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