



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

June 5, 2015

The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Heitkamp:

On behalf of the AAFP, which represents 120,900 physicians and students nationwide, thank you for sharing a copy of the bill titled the *SOAR to Health and Wellness Act of 2015*, (S 1446), and I am pleased to inform you that the AAFP supports this important legislation. Family physicians appreciate your leadership in addressing the health care needs of these victims, often minors and in serious distress.

This bill would make available to health care providers, including physicians, additional training to help identify and protect victims and survivors of human trafficking. S 1446 would expand an existing pilot program, administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration that is designed to offer training to those physicians and health care professionals who are more likely to come across potential victims of human trafficking and help make sure these victims get the help they need. It is particularly important to develop these training programs, since recent studies conclude that nearly one-third of women trafficked in the US saw a health care professional while still captive.

According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, minors forced to participate in prostitution, pornography, or erotic entertainment is one of the most common forms of human trafficking in the United States. A significant difference between the care of these patients and other unaccompanied minors is that the former requires an additional, crucial step: identification. Your legislation will provide the opportunity to family physicians and other health care professionals to access additional training to identify these victims and provide them with support and care based on their situation.

If we can provide assistance to you in the advancing this legislation, please contact Kevin Burke, the AAFP Director of Government Relations at kburke@aafp.org.

Sincerely,

Reid Blackwelder, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair

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