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August 11, 2017

The Honorable Steve Cohen
U.S. House of Representatives
2404 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Kinzinger
U.S. House of Representatives
2245 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tony Cardenas
U.S. House of Representatives
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ann Wagner
U.S. House of Representatives
435 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Cohen, Kinzinger, Cardenas and Wagner:

On behalf of the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) and our more than 43,000 members, I am writing to express our support for H.R. 767, the Stop, Observe, Ask, and Respond to Health and Wellness Act. This important and timely legislation will ensure that health care providers across the country are trained to identify and assist victims of human trafficking.

As you know, human trafficking has become a global human rights crisis, from which the United States is not immune. According to the Department of Justice, more than 15,000 foreign nationals are trafficked into the United States each year. Additionally, it is estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of human trafficking victims currently in the U.S. Unfortunately, only a small percentage are identified and rescued.

Health care providers, especially emergency nurses, are critical resources in the fight against this scourge. Research has indicated that as many as 88 percent of all trafficking victims receive medical treatment while being trafficked. Moreover, 63 percent of those individuals receive treatment in an emergency department. Often, they exhibit symptoms of trauma or emotional abuse. However, these warning signs often go unnoticed by professionals treating these individuals, in part because of a lack of consistent training in the identification and proper response with respect to human trafficking victims.

The Stop, Observe, Ask, and Report (SOAR) to Health and Wellness Act will seek to improve care for victims of human trafficking by creating a new pilot program to provide funding to train health care and related providers to identify victims of trafficking, report potential cases to law enforcement, refer patients to social service agencies and provide comprehensive, patient-centered care.



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As professionals on the frontlines of our nation's health care system, emergency nurses are uniquely positioned to identify and assist victims of human trafficking. We would like to thank you for introducing this important legislation and your leadership on this critical issue. If you have any questions, please contact ENA's Chief Government Relations Officer, Richard Mereu, at 202-741-9373.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Karen K. Wiley'.

Karen K. Wiley, MSN, RN, CEN
2017 ENA President