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Port Tampa Bay Leads the Fight Against Human Trafficking at Sea

Tampa, FL – January is National Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and to support this occasion, Port Tampa Bay is committed to preventing human trafficking by increasing awareness throughout their facilities and becoming the first port authority in the nation to receive [Ports to Freedom](#) human trafficking awareness training from Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking ([BEST](#)) as part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's [Combating Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award](#).

BEST and the American Association of Port Authorities ([AAPA](#)) received this national award to conduct the [Not Alone](#) awareness campaign and provide in person training for seaport employees. This powerful initiative aims to raise awareness about the prevalence of human trafficking in the maritime industry by increasing employee awareness of the indicators of human trafficking and helping victims of human trafficking know who to contact for help.

On January 22, 2024, Port Tampa Bay is training employees with BEST's *Ports to Freedom* human trafficking prevention training. Throughout January, the port is participating in the *Not Alone* awareness campaign by placing multi-lingual signs throughout port facilities to encourage both victims and bystanders to become aware of the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

Reporters are invited to attend the *Ports to Freedom* training on January 22, 2024. The training will be hosted at Port Tampa Bay's Board Room located at 1101 Channelside Drive, Tampa, Florida at 1:00 p.m. Spokespeople will be available for media interviews after the training ends at 2:00 p.m. to emphasize how the training is supporting Port Tampa Bay's efforts for National Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and the knowledge employees gain from this training will be used to help watch for potential human trafficking situations throughout the year.

"Every person deserves a life of dignity. I am proud of Port Tampa Bay's partnership with BEST and our actions to bring awareness and lead toward an end of the scourge of human trafficking. Our staff and port partners take pride on being at the forefront of this issue," explained Paul Anderson, Port Tampa Bay President & CEO. "This training, which targets the maritime community, will raise life-changing awareness to our staff and port partners."

Human trafficking is a global problem, affecting millions of lives. Labor trafficking is a form of exploitation that can happen easily at sea, where victims are often extremely isolated, their work is happening in international waters, and there can be confusion about which country's labor laws are being followed. Workers exploited at sea can often only ask for help when their vessel docks at a seaport. But in an unfamiliar country, trafficking victims may not know how they can receive assistance. When human trafficking victims see signs posted in the places they frequent, they learn they are in a safe place where they can ask for and receive help to stop abuse. In addition, when seaport employees are properly trained to recognize the indicators of human trafficking, they can learn how to safely report it.

"Awareness campaigns like *Not Alone*, combined with our maritime industry employee training course, *Ports to Freedom*, enable safe and effective reporting of human trafficking incidents at port authorities and help victims find paths to freedom," describes Kirsten Foot, PhD, CEO & Executive Director for Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking. "We are absolutely thrilled to see Port Tampa Bay taking this training and posting signage throughout their facilities to help more human trafficking victims get the assistance they need."

Port Tampa Bay's commitment to preventing human trafficking resonates far beyond its own borders. By becoming the first port authority to receive BEST's *Ports to Freedom* through the Combatting Human Trafficking in Transportation Impact Award, they are setting a strong precedent for other seaports and transportation hubs across the country to follow suit.

"AAPA is proud to proactively educate and raise awareness of human trafficking via the *Not Alone* campaign, alongside our great partners such as BEST," stated Cary Davis, CEO and President of AAPA. "I once heard a wise industry leader say, 'Some precious cargo we just won't move.' We thank the USDOT for making this project possible and Port Tampa Bay for being one of the first of many seaports across the Western Hemisphere to train employees on the signs and indicators of exploitation."

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About Port of Tampa Bay

Port Tampa Bay is Florida's largest port, supporting nearly 85,000 jobs and generating more than \$17 billion in annual economic impact. In addition to being a top 10 U.S. cruise port, the port handles a wide array of bulk, break bulk, containers and roll-on/roll-off cargoes, and is a major shipbuilding and repair center. For more information, visit www.portTB.com.

About Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking

Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization with the mission to educate employers to prevent human trafficking and create pathways to employment for survivors. BEST is the first organization in the country dedicated entirely to working with employers to disrupt human trafficking. BEST has provided consultation and training to hundreds of employers on how to prevent human trafficking. For more information visit www.bestalliance.org.

About the American Association of Port Authorities

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) is the unified voice of port leaders and maritime industry partners across the Western Hemisphere who serve a vital role in job-creation, international competitiveness, and economic prosperity. Connecting small business owners, retailers, and manufacturers to the global marketplace, AAPA member organizations sustain 31 million jobs and 26 percent of the U.S. economy, and advocate for national policies and infrastructure investments in support of a resilient global supply chain and a positive impact on the way people live, work, travel, and engage in commerce.