

Statement of Cindy Dyer
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador at Large to Monitor and
Combat Trafficking in Persons
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
November 30, 2022

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished Senators, thank you for today's hearing to consider my nomination to be the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. I am honored by President Biden's nomination and the support of Secretary Blinken to lead the United States' global efforts to combat human trafficking.

I want to thank my family, particularly my husband Jason Ankele, whose support and sacrifice has allowed me to pursue a career which is also my passion. I am also thankful for my children Aubrey Scott and Evie Claire Ankele who steadfastly provide me with enough joy and laughter to counter the sometimes heart-breaking challenges that are endemic to this work. And I am grateful for my late mother Peggy Oswald who would be so proud to see me sitting here today.

I also want to recognize the team in the Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons who, thanks to sustained support from Congress, has been leading this cause for more than 20 years. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee and across the U.S. Congress to continue advancing this important work.

I began my career more than 25 years ago as a prosecutor in the family violence unit in Dallas, Texas. For 13 years I prosecuted cases at all levels, helping to bring justice to victims, including survivors of human trafficking, by holding offenders accountable. When I was later appointed in 2007 as Director of the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, I led federal efforts to further strengthen our nation's capacity to address violence against women. And then, at Vital Voices Global Partnership, I collaborated with local governments and civil society organizations around the world to strengthen their capacities to respond to crimes and violence against women, including human trafficking. Throughout my work across the local, federal, and international levels, I have learned that successfully combating these crimes requires a sustained and comprehensive approach.

In the early nineties when I first began prosecuting cases, human trafficking was not recognized as a crime. We have come a long way since then, due in large part to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and the comprehensive framework it established to recognize human trafficking as a crime, hold traffickers accountable, and provide critical services to victims and survivors.

If confirmed, I will prioritize maintaining the balanced and comprehensive approach the TIP Office has carefully developed, focusing on the full spectrum of human trafficking and supporting efforts to prevent and respond to the crime by upholding international legal standards, addressing vulnerabilities that traffickers target, and integrating an equity-based approach throughout the TIP Office's work.

The role that survivors, or those with lived experience of human trafficking, can play in developing and informing anti-trafficking efforts is critical and it will be among my highest priorities, if confirmed, to elevate their role and integrate their input even further. We need survivors at the table with us, developing victim-centered and trauma-informed solutions to combat sex trafficking and forced labor. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking and the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to ensure that we continue to integrate survivor expertise into anti-trafficking work and bring the full resources of the U.S. federal government to bear in the fight against human trafficking.

The United States' global leadership on this issue is reflected nowhere clearer than the annual Trafficking in Persons Report, the world's most comprehensive resource on governmental anti-trafficking efforts and the U.S. government's principal diplomatic tool to guide relations with foreign governments on human trafficking. If confirmed, I will strive to ensure the Report remains objective and accurate, and that tier rankings are based solely on a country's efforts to combat trafficking.

The TIP Office's targeted foreign assistance to build the capacity of governments and civil society and protect victims is integral to the Department's holistic anti-trafficking approach. If confirmed, I will leverage the resources that Congress has entrusted to the TIP Office to advance programming that is informed by the TIP Report and respond to emerging threats and opportunities. In the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, we have an opportunity and obligation to proactively address the threat of human trafficking by applying foreign assistance resources and urging governments to take steps to protect Ukrainian and third country nationals fleeing the war.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, successfully combating human trafficking requires that we confront this crime aggressively. If confirmed, I will draw upon the many tools available to the TIP Office – diplomacy, foreign assistance, robust interagency coordination mechanisms, and survivors' expertise – to prevent this crime from taking place, protect the victims, and prosecute the traffickers.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I welcome your questions.