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The White House has Announced the Selected Survivor Leaders of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking

Washington, DC – On Wednesday, December 16, 2015, President Obama announced the appointment of eleven members of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, mandated under the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (JVTA). Included in the JVTA is the Human Trafficking Empowerment Act, which affirms the importance of survivor input and expertise in order to implement federal policy and programming that is effective for survivors of labor and sex trafficking.

The Human Trafficking Empowerment Act is landmark legislation as it includes the expertise and voices of Survivor Leaders to advise on policy and programming in the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. The National Survivor Network (NSN) provided input on the Membership Selection process. NSN advocated that diversity of membership should be the first priority. For example, diversity in type of trafficking, sex and labor, international and domestic, female and male and various types of sexual exploitation. Individuals should be diverse by ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, region of the country and subject matter expertise (i.e. programming and policy).

NSN has a history of advocating for inclusion of survivor voices at the federal level. NSN promoted H.R. 500: Survivors of Human Trafficking Empowerment Act in early 2015 prior to this legislation being added to the JVTA.

Autumn Burris, policy champion for H.R. 500, stated “The inclusiveness of survivor leader voices at the federal level will decrease challenges related to policy and program implementation, resulting in the reduction in waste of governmental resources.”

“The passing of the Survivor Empowerment Act and the appointment of these eleven survivor leaders sends a powerful message to the country. It is a victory for all survivors, including those still being exploited,” said Ima Matul, Survivor Coordinator for the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST) and appointed council member.

Sheila White an appointed NSN member explains “It means so much to me as a survivor, a friend, and colleague to be a part of the council. I am looking forward to all the great work and expertise that we all bring to this initiative to combat the issue of human trafficking. We have all come from different aspects of life in what we have experienced and we have made a conscious decision within ourselves and



professionally to not allow what we have been through define us and what we are capable of achieving. I am so proud to stand in solidarity with my survivor community and allies alike to move forward in the years to come to not only give a voice but also to highlight leadership for survivors everywhere!”

“This legislation gives Survivor Experts a platform to assist with policy into practice challenges. *Nothing About Us Without Us*” says Barbara Amaya, Survivor Subject Matter Expert, Author, Member of National Survivor Network.

About NSN

NSN is a network of trafficking survivors created in February 2011. The NSN’s mission statement is to bring together a community of survivors of human trafficking, by creating a platform for survivor-led advocacy, peer-to-peer mentorship, and empowerment that embraces all survivors, regardless of gender, age, nationality or type of trafficking experience. Members include men and women survivors of human trafficking from 32 different states and 22 different countries.

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