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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Muncie Indiana – As January comes to a close, Prosecuting Attorney Eric Hoffman wanted to take a moment to recognize Human Trafficking Awareness Month and bring attention to this very real issue that can occur in every county in Indiana.

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. It is usually thought of as something that only happens in big metropolitan areas, but, in reality, human trafficking can and does happen all around Indiana. Like many crimes, this one has become more prevalent over the past few years, especially considering the pandemic. With more young people dealing with economic and home life hardships, it can become easier to get trapped into being trafficked. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline there were 10,583 reported cases in 2020, the last year data was available. But experts believe the actual number of human trafficking victims and cases is much higher than this metric. This is due, in part, because some human trafficking victims don't believe they are victims.

Trafficking takes on two main forms. The vast majority of cases (72%) are sex trafficking cases but labor trafficking also occurs. Those most vulnerable to sex trafficking in the United States are youth in the welfare or juvenile justice system, homeless youth or runaways. These victims are typically trafficked by someone they know. It is rare for trafficking victims to be randomly kidnapped and forced into trafficking.

According to experts, here are some warning signs for potential trafficking when it comes to juveniles and young adults: unexplained absences, skipping school, expensive gifts that would be out of budget like designer handbags, spending a lot of time with an older person who is relatively new in their life, and having more than one phone.

As your prosecutor, I want to raise awareness about the signs of trafficking and assure you that my office is doing everything in our power to prosecute these cases if and when they come to light. By raising awareness and watching out for each other, we can make sure the scourge of trafficking doesn't visit Delaware County. If you see something suspicious, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888 or local law enforcement.

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