

**PROCLAMATION DECLARING JANUARY 2018
NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH**

WHEREAS, the United States was founded on the principle that all people are born with an unalienable right to freedom – yet, millions of people worldwide are victims of Human Trafficking. During National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, we acknowledge that forms of slavery still exist in the modern era, and we recommit ourselves to stopping the human traffickers who ply this horrific trade; and

WHEREAS, as we continue our fight to deliver on the promise of freedom, we commemorate the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed the slaves of the Confederate states on January 1, 1863, and the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in 1865. Throughout the month of January 2018, we highlight the many fronts in the ongoing battle for civil rights – including efforts of the Hidalgo County District Attorney’s Office and the Rio Grande Valley Human Trafficking Coalition, which is comprised of Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, victim service agencies, and social service providers, who are working to end human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, the victims of human trafficking are men and women, adults and children; yet, all are denied basic human dignity and freedom. Victims can be abused in their own countries or find themselves far from home. Whether they are trapped in forced sexual or labor exploitation, human trafficking victims cannot walk away, but are held in service through force, threats, and fear. All too often suffering from horrible physical and sexual abuse, it is hard for them to imagine that there might be a place of refuge; and

WHEREAS, we must join together as a community in Hidalgo County to provide a safe haven by protecting victims and prosecuting traffickers. With improved victim identification, medical and social services, training for first responders, and increased public awareness; the men, women, and children who have suffered this scourge can overcome the bonds of modern slavery, receive protection and justice, and successfully reclaim their rightful independence; and

WHEREAS, fighting of human trafficking is a shared responsibility. This month, Hidalgo County residents are urged to educate themselves about all forms of modern slavery and the signs and consequences of human trafficking. Together, we can and must end this most serious, ongoing criminal civil rights violation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court does hereby proclaim January 2018 as National Human Trafficking Prevention Month and calls upon the people of Hidalgo County to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities and to recognize the vital role we can play in ending human trafficking.

Approved this 16th day of January 2018.

RAMON GARCIA
County Judge

DAVID L. FUENTES
County Commissioner, Pct. 1

EDUARDO “EDDIE” CANTU
County Commissioner, Pct. 2

JOE M. FLORES
County Commissioner, Pct. 3

JOSEPH PALACIOS
County Commissioner, Pct. 4

Attest: ARTURO GUAJARDO, JR.
County Clerk