



WHEREAS, freedom, justice and the pursuit of happiness is the foundation of American culture, we may find it hard to fathom we live in a world where people are deprived of these rights; a world where people are trafficked for labor or commercial sex. The heinous crime of human trafficking is not confined to some remote country; it is happening right here, within all segments of our community; and,

WHEREAS, human trafficking is the organized criminal activity in which human beings are treated as possessions to be controlled or exploited; human trafficking is a nationwide public health and civil rights crisis; and,

WHEREAS, Gaston County is a prime location for human trafficking because of its geographical location as a national and international corridor; and,

WHEREAS, in 2020, there were 397 cases of human trafficking reported to the National Human Trafficking hotline in North Carolina, ranking North Carolina as the 11th state for human trafficking within the country; and,

WHEREAS, victims of human trafficking are frequently members of vulnerable populations, such as domestic violence and sexual assault survivors, members of immigrant communities, minors in foster care and homeless or runaway youth; and,

WHEREAS, the effects of human trafficking reach far beyond its victims and perpetrators causing disruption in our schools, places of work and neighborhoods; and,

WHEREAS, with leadership, dedication and encouragement there is compelling evidence we can be successful in reducing human trafficking in our community through prevention education, increased awareness and holding offenders accountable for their actions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Gaston County Board of Commissioners hereby proclaims the month of January 2022 as

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS MONTH

and encourages all Gaston County residents to learn more about the risks and indicators of human trafficking and to do their part in helping end this crisis. The reality of this evil enterprise can become overwhelming; however, if history has taught us anything, it is the fact that Gaston County will not be overcome in the face of adversity. Together, we can protect the vulnerable, help victims find healing and bring offenders to justice.

Chad Brown, Chairman

Allen R. Fraley

Tom Keigher

Bob Hovis, Vice-Chairman

Tracy L. Philbeck

Kim Johnson

Ronald E. Worley

To be Adopted the 25th Day of January 2022