



WHEREAS, freedom, justice, and the pursuit of happiness are core American values, yet human trafficking continues to violate these rights within communities across the nation, including Gaston County; and,

WHEREAS, human trafficking—whether for labor, services, or commercial sex—is an organized criminal enterprise that exploits individuals and poses a significant public safety threat; and,

WHEREAS, North Carolina has consistently ranked among the top ten states for reported human trafficking cases, underscoring the need for statewide and local action; and,

WHEREAS, victims are often individuals from vulnerable populations, including survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, immigrant communities, minors in foster care, and youth experiencing homelessness or instability; and,

WHEREAS, Gaston County continues to strengthen its response through coordinated efforts led by the Gaston County Family Justice Center, in partnership with Law Enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, Public Health, Social Services, Sheriffs Office, CaroMont Health, and community organizations to enhance prevention, early identification, trauma-informed support, and offender accountability; and,

WHEREAS, with continued leadership, education, and community engagement, Gaston County can reduce the prevalence of human trafficking by promoting awareness, supporting survivors, and investing in coordinated prevention efforts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Gaston County Board of Commissioners hereby proclaims the month of January 2026 as

Human Trafficking Awareness Month

in Gaston County and encourages all residents, organizations, and community partners to join in the effort to prevent trafficking, support survivors, and build a safer community for all.

Chad Brown, Chairman

Jim Bailey

Bob Hovis, Vice-Chairman

Cathy Cloninger

Tom Keigher

Allen R. Fraley

Scott Shehan