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Bipartisan Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act of 2021 introduced

*Remarks at press conference
by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)
Washington, DC—September 3, 2021*

Joined by Frederick Douglass' great, great, great grandson Ken Morris—a remarkable human rights champion and cofounder of the Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives (FDI)—Congresswoman Karen Bass of California and I are today introducing the *Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2021*.

As part of the present-day abolitionist movement, Ken Morris and FDI “bring the guidance of history to the fight against modern forms of slavery”.

We introduce this comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation on this special day—September 3rd—to recognize, remember and celebrate the anniversary of the self-emancipation of Frederick Douglass.

On September 3rd, 1838, Frederick Douglass disguised himself as a sailor and travelled from Baltimore to New York and bravely and brilliantly led the fight to end slavery, Jim Crow laws and advance respect and equality.

Frederick Douglass' life and mission are incomparable—and inspire.

Remembering his tenacity, today we combat the scourge of sex and labor trafficking—modern-day slavery—and rededicate ourselves to abolishing it.

Over the past several months, Ken Morris, Karen Bass and I—with an extraordinary assist from our professional staff members including Mary Vigil, Corey Holmes, Piero Tozzi, and Heather Zenone—and with the inputs, insights and best practices of many leaders and NGOs—including survivor-leaders Robert Lung and Bella Hanoukey—have crafted bipartisan legislation to reauthorize and significantly strengthen America's whole-of-government effort both

domestically and internationally to protect trafficking victims, prosecute perpetrators of these heinous crimes and prevent it, to the best of our ability.

Our bill reauthorizes successful programs created by legislation I authored two decades ago—the [Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000](#)—and subsequent reauthorizations and enhances some of them.

For example, the bill strengthens the elementary and secondary school prevention education grant that Karen Bass and I created in [the Frederick Douglass Act of 2018](#), which will be known as the “Frederick Douglass Prevention Education grant,” to prevent online grooming and trafficking of children through linguistically accessible, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed approaches and scalable programs that use proven and tested best practices while also training the trainers to sustain the programs.

It also reauthorizes and strengthens [International Megan’s Law](#) and strengthens it to track convicted sex offenders; it protects victims and witnesses during investigations; provides restitution for survivors; prevents unfair sentencing of youthful offenders who were victims of trafficking; and provides stricter sanctions for traffickers and tier 3 countries.

The bill also adds accountability for the U.S. Federal and foreign governments, hotels, and airlines through anti-trafficking training and codes of conduct for their staff; transparency in anti-trafficking expenditures; permanently incorporates the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking; and highlights the delinquency of reporting by state child welfare agencies and the Department of Justice in reporting missing and abducted children at-risk of being trafficked.

And more. We will provide you with a summary.

I am joined by my colleague and original co-sponsor on this bill, Rep. Karen Bass. She is the representative for California’s 37th Congressional District, serving her sixth term. Congressmember Bass serves on the [House Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) where she is the Chair of the [Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights](#). She also serves on the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism, where she is active in working to craft sound criminal justice reform policies. She is former Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus and former Speaker of the California State Assembly and first-ever African American woman in U.S. history to serve as a Speaker of any State legislature.

Today we have Kenneth B. Morris, Jr., the great-great-great-grandson of Frederick Douglass and the great-great grandson of Booker T. Washington—two of the most influential leaders in American history. Mr. Morris is also the president of Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives (FDFI). FDFI is a Rochester, NY-based public charity whose mission is to *Build strong children and to end systems of exploitation and oppression*.