October 5, 2016

The Honorable Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ann Wagner
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rob Portman
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tulsi Gabbard
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David W. Jolly
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Gillibrand, Senator Portman, Representative Wagner, Representative Gabbard, and Representative Jolly:

On behalf of the American Bar Association (ABA) and our over 400,000 members, I am writing to convey our appreciation for your efforts to assist and protect the rights of victims of human trafficking. We commend you for your leadership in introducing the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act (S. 3441, H.R. 6292).

The ABA has long supported efforts to increase protection and assistance for victims of trafficking. In 2013, the ABA adopted a resolution urging lawmakers to aid victims of human trafficking by enacting laws that permit victims to vacate their criminal convictions for crimes related to prostitution or other nonviolent crimes that are a direct result of their trafficking victimization. The Trafficking Survivors Relief Act would allow for exactly this; the legislation would permit a victim of trafficking to move to vacate convictions and expunge arrests for nonviolent crimes committed by the victim as a direct result of human trafficking.

Survivors of human trafficking—who have endured beatings, sexual assault, and psychological control—are often arrested and convicted for prostitution and other related offenses. These survivors then face significant barriers stemming from criminalization and stigmatization that prevent them from rebuilding their lives; their criminal records prevent them from successfully applying for jobs, housing, and loans. Legislation like the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act offers survivors of trafficking a significant opportunity to move forward with their lives and leave the reminders of their victimization in the past.
Thank you again for your leadership on this important matter. We stand ready to assist you in advancing this legislation. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact me at thomas.susman@americanbar.org or (202) 662-1765, or Sara Dill, Director of Criminal Justice Standards and Policy, at sara.dill@americanbar.org or (202) 662-1511.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Thomas M. Susman