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For Immediate Release

Pritzker Signs Bill Providing Food, Healthcare & Services for Survivors of Human Trafficking
HB2118 to Continue Critical Program that Provides Assistance to Survivors

Aug. 20, 2019 – Chicago -- Governor JB Pritzker recently signed HB2188 into law, which allows for the continuation of critical services to immigrant survivors of human trafficking, torture, and other serious crimes.

HB2118 ensures that survivors continue to have access to state-funded assistance, such as nutrition support, cash assistance, and health care. These services can be accessed for up to one year while they are preparing their visa applications, and awaiting a final decision on their visas.

Heartland Alliance led advocacy for the passage of HB2118 through insights gleaned from its Freedom from Trafficking program. Many of the participants struggled to meet their basic needs and therefore, the continuation of this bill ensures that those we serve can maintain access to vital supports.

“This program has been life-changing for the survivors of trafficking that Heartland Alliance serves,” said Kimberly Drew, Legislative Advocacy Director at Heartland Alliance, “The passage of this bill means that this important program will continue to help survivors meet their most basic human needs such as food and healthcare.”

Before this program was put in place, human trafficking survivors were only eligible to receive employment authorization and federally funded public benefits, like food assistance and health care, after they received a visa or were granted asylum. But those often lengthy processes left many without the support they needed while they were at their most vulnerable.

“HB2118 provides the protection needed by survivors who are escaping trafficking, seeking safety, and highly vulnerable to further exploitation and harm,” said Rep. Lisa Hernandez, chief sponsor of HB2118. “The passage of this bill ensures that we can continue to provide life-saving assistance to survivors as they heal and gain stability and safety in their lives.”

The bill will extend the program to July 1, 2022, so that survivors can maintain access to crucial support.

“Illinois can take pride in opening our arms to individuals who have been victims of horrific crimes and are seeking a land of safety and opportunity,” said Sen. Jacqueline Collins, chief sponsor of HB2118. “By continuing this program we can carry on this welcoming tradition here in our state by assisting survivors while their cases are being processed.”

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[Heartland Alliance](http://www.heartlandalliance.org), one of the world's leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve those who are experiencing homelessness, living in poverty, or seeking safety. It provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of health, housing, jobs and justice—and leads state and national policy efforts, which target lasting change for individuals and society.