



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

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## Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

Full Committee Hearing:

*Data Challenges Impacting Human Trafficking Research and Development of  
Anti-Trafficking Technological Tools*

February 8, 2022

Good morning and thank you to the witnesses for joining us today.

This Committee held its first hearing on the role of science and technology in combating human trafficking a year and a half ago. It coincided with World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. As we are in the wake of National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, now is a good time to discuss the data challenges that stymie advances in anti-trafficking research and technology development.

Human trafficking is a major issue in Texas and just days ago, a raid in Dallas resulted in the arrest of two traffickers. This crime preys on the most vulnerable and it knows no borders, it is not gender-specific, and it crosses socio-economic barriers.

In the 20 years of policymaking on this issue, what progress has been made?

What's working, what isn't, and why? Unfortunately, some of the data needed to address these questions is too often siloed across various databases, is non-existent, or is inconsistent.

The amount of peer-reviewed academic literature and robust advanced research on human trafficking is disappointingly low. Standardizing data and improving data collection can provide a basis for more and better research, analysis, and ultimately improved outcomes for survivors.

Bringing together multidisciplinary teams of researchers with survivors, nonprofits, Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, private sector, and international partners will be critically important. We need more Federal coordination of research and technology development that will lead to evidence-based, victim-centered, survivor-informed, and culturally-informed anti-trafficking strategies. Increasing data sharing and making use of machine learning and other tools will help bring this crime out of the shadows.

As we continue to tackle this issue, we must also move toward more equitable data collection. To understand the full scale and scope of this issue, we must ensure that black, brown, Indigenous, LGBTQ, and non-citizen survivors of human trafficking are included in the data. I hope that this Committee will support a strong role for Federally-supported science and technology in a whole-of-government effort to combat human trafficking for a safer, more secure America.