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PORT OF PALM BEACH MEDIA CONTACT

Yaremi Farinas
561-383-4138
yfarinas@portofpalmbeach.com

BEST MEDIA CONTACT

Katie Amodei
425-787-5128
katie@bestalliance.org

Port of Palm Beach Introduces New Employee Training Program for Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Riviera Beach, FL. – The Port of Palm Beach announces a new partnership with the nonprofit organization Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) to train employees on human trafficking prevention in observance of Human Trafficking Awareness Month. This new training program will help employees learn the indicators of human trafficking at seaports and what they can do if they witness a potential human trafficking incident.

The training is called *Ports to Freedom*, and it is the first online, video-based training program specifically designed for the maritime industry. The Port of Palm Beach is the third seaport in the United States to begin using this new human trafficking prevention training.

“We are proud to be the first seaport in Florida to adopt the *Ports to Freedom* training. I believe it shows our commitment to safety and security. The more our employees learn how to identify and report a potential human trafficking situation, the better chance there is of saving a life,” said Port Executive Director Manuel Almira.

The Port of Palm Beach Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the training during its January 21 regular board meeting.

Seaports can be a key location for identifying people who are victims of human trafficking, so it's essential that employees working at ports are properly trained in what to watch for. *Ports to Freedom* will help Port of Palm Beach employees learn how to recognize the behaviors that can indicate human trafficking and how to safely report it.

Victims of human trafficking can include women, men, and children who are subjected to sexual exploitation or forced labor through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

When labor trafficking victims are stuck on maritime vessels, they can be forced to work long hours, compelled to extend their contracts, be paid less than they agreed to work for, or their wages can be withheld entirely. Often, the only opportunity these victims have to seek help is when a ship is docked at port.

Sex trafficking can also take place at port facilities or onboard ships when seafarers participate in commercial sexual exploitation, either while ships are at dock, or at sea.

Both forms of human trafficking—labor trafficking and sex trafficking—can be thwarted when seaport employees are properly trained and know how to spot the warning signs of human trafficking.

Florida currently has the third largest number of human trafficking cases reported in the nation, and in 2019 there were 896 cases from Florida reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Raising awareness about human trafficking can help more victims get an opportunity to escape their exploiters. Increasing awareness at seaports starts with having a well-trained workforce who know what to watch for.

The Port of Palm Beach is providing this training because it supports the human trafficking prevention efforts of the Department of Transportation (DOT) who has launched a national [pledge](#) program against human trafficking, asking transportation leaders to commit to helping end human trafficking. Seaports that sign the pledge are committing to train employees to recognize and report the signs of human trafficking. So far, more than 200 transportation groups—including the Port of Palm Beach—have joined the DOT's pledge. Providing *Ports to Freedom* training is helping the Port of Palm Beach align with the DOT's priorities.

"The Department of Transportation's pledge program is shining a light on a problem that is the human rights issue of our modern times," said Mar Brettmann, CEO of BEST. "By signing the pledge, the Port of Palm Beach is committing to train their employees so they can learn how to be an advocate for victims if they see something that may be a trafficking situation. This can help more vulnerable people have a chance to escape their traffickers and rebuild their lives."

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About Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST)

Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) is a Seattle-based nonprofit organization with the mission to align and equip leaders to use the power of business to prevent human trafficking. BEST is the first organization in the country dedicated entirely to working with employers to disrupt human trafficking. BEST has provided consultation and training to thousands of employers on how to prevent human trafficking. For more information about BEST visit www.bestalliance.org. For more information about using *Ports of Freedom*, visit www.bestalliance.org/maritime.html

About Port of Palm Beach

Located in Riviera Beach, the Port of Palm Beach is a full-service, diversified port, offering cruise and cargo services to more than 30 onsite tenants and users. At 162 acres, the Port's efficiency is unparalleled, processing more than \$7 billion in commodities, 2.5 million tons of cargo, and 500,000 cruise passengers annually. As one of the largest employers in Palm Beach County, the Port of Palm Beach and its tenants employ more than 2,850 people. Through the contribution of more than \$185

million in business revenue and \$17.5 million in tenant-contributed state and local annual tax revenue, the Port of Palm Beach is a large economic engine in South Florida. For more information, visit www.portofpalmbeach.com