



# Proclamation

**WHEREAS**, human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery and is a crime against humanity that violates the most basic human rights; Florida is ranked as one of the states with the highest number of calls to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center; and

**WHEREAS**, human trafficking occurs when an adult or child is recruited, harbored, obtained, or exploited through force, fraud or coercion for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labor, involuntary servitude, debt bondage and other methods of slavery; and

**WHEREAS**, girls and boys in the commercial sex trade are commonly between the age of 14- 16 years old; in 2017, an estimated 1 out of 7 endangered runaways reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children were likely child sex trafficking victims; and

**WHEREAS**, traffickers find their victims through social networks, in neighborhoods, clubs, the internet, parks and our schools, and lure their victims with promises of love, protection, adventure, a sense of belonging, and opportunity; then using multiple means to control their victims including beatings, rape, isolation, drug or alcohol dependency, document withholding, and psychological and emotional abuse; and

**WHEREAS**, through the Marion County Human Trafficking Taskforce, our local community unites to combat this modern-day slavery and brings together non-profits, government, and private sector businesses in prevention, prosecution, education, and awareness efforts to restore freedom and dignity to survivors.

**NOW THEREFORE, I, Ben Marciano**, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Ocala, Florida, do hereby proclaim January 2025 as:

**“NATIONAL SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION MONTH”**

in the City of Ocala and I encourage all Floridians to join in an effort to put an end to the assaults on the inalienable rights of victims who are trafficked in our State, restoring their dignity and freedom.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Ocala, Florida, to be affixed this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of January 2025.



*Ben Marciano*

Ben Marciano, Mayor  
City of Ocala