

**Statement of Ms. Barbera Thornhill**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador at Large to Monitor and Combat**  
**Trafficking in Persons**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**June 25, 2026**

Chairman Hagerty and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for considering my nomination to be the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. I am honored by President Trump's nomination and grateful for Secretary Rubio's work to lead the Department's anti-trafficking efforts.

If I may, I would like to introduce my family and friends with me here today. My son Hale Thornhill-Wilson and his fiancée Emma Evans, Odera Nwobi, who is like a second son to me and his wife Ally, my cousins Fred and Fabian Thornhill, Elsie and Arthur James, and my longtime colleague Evelyn Mangilet.

Let me share a little about my background. I came from a loving family in North Carolina long known for its involvement in healthcare and charitable work. My mother, a pediatrician, was one of the first women to go to Duke Medical School and my father, an ENT, invented the procedure known as "Stapedectomy", an operation that led to the Cochlear implant - a device that has helped millions of people hear again. But more than his skill as a surgeon, it was my father's commitment to treating underserved people and providing them with blessings that we so often take for granted that inspires me even now and motivates me every day.

I had the honor to live and work with Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta in 1994, lending an American heart and hands to their important work with children in orphanages, ailing homebound families, and to the destitute and dying in the hospice known as the "Home of the Pure Heart."

In the United States I worked extensively with Scouts BSA formerly known as the Boy Scouts of America that has provided leadership and mentored youths to help them climb the ladder of personal achievement and prepare them for life struggles and challenges. This program has impacted over 20,000 underprivileged adolescents, many in the foster system. I also worked with the Children's Institute in Los Angeles to help provide basic needs, early childhood education, psychological counseling, personal encouragement, and love for over 28,000 children who have been abused and have suffered many other horrible traumas. I

have had the privileged of working with Lauri Burns, a survivor of child abuse, foster care, and human trafficking. She is the Founder of the Teen Project which operates residential programs for trafficking victims. She created an innovative app that connects victims with immediate rescue, treatment, and transportation.

My past community involvements have led me to the conviction that Human Trafficking is among the most brutal and reprehensible crimes where millions worldwide are used for forced labor and sex trafficking. Traffickers operate within and across borders, using everything they can to exploit weak governance, mass migration, and opaque supply chains. Confronting these crimes protects Americans by ensuring their natural rights, preventing their exploitation, and defending communities and businesses from criminal networks and unfair labor practices.

America is, and always will be, the leader in the global fight against human trafficking which desecrates the principles of freedom, justice, and opportunity that are essential to a safe, prosperous, and thriving global economy. Secretary Rubio has set forth the Department's mission to "promote peace abroad, and security and prosperity here at home." Combating human trafficking is vital to that mission. Ever since the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 established our federal anti-trafficking framework, bipartisan commitment remains our strongest tool.

The fight continues each day as traffickers adapt and exploit new technologies and methods. The rise of online sexual victimization and forced labor schemes tied to online scams are two especially alarming trends, defrauding Americans and trapping victims in coercive schemes at home and abroad. This Administration took important steps, including signing the TAKE IT DOWN Act in May 2025 to combat online exploitation. We have sanctioned online scam operators using forced labor to steal billions from Americans. If confirmed, I will build on these efforts. Forced labor distorts markets and allows foreign actors to abuse the global trading system at the expense of American workers and businesses. We must use every tool to combat forced labor in global supply chains and to shed light on forced labor schemes used by our adversaries.

The annual Trafficking in Persons Report is a powerful instrument for demanding accountability and pressing governments to take meaningful action or face consequences. If confirmed, I will ensure the report continues to drive impact and that it guides U.S. efforts to counter human trafficking, ensuring our resources are directed precisely to where they deliver the greatest results for the U.S. taxpayer.

Ending human trafficking requires partnership. I am committed to engaging survivors of human trafficking as partners. Their expertise shapes effective policies and provides insight into how traffickers operate.

If confirmed, I will also prioritize stronger interagency coordination, leading unified efforts to support President Trump's agenda and bring the weight of the U.S. government to bear against traffickers.

As President Trump stated, "we renew our commitment to end the evil of human trafficking...and ensure that every trafficker faces the full force of American justice." If confirmed, I will work with Congress and our partners to relentlessly bring traffickers to justice, support victims and survivors, and defend American interests.

I will work that we will be measured not by our intentions but by the lives we protect, the voices we elevate and the futures we help reclaim. Thank you. I look forward to your questions.