

# Funding for Direct Service and Survivor Led NGOs Desperately Needed

By Niko Xavales

*Niko has spent over a decade as a dedicated advocate for survivors of sex trafficking and has worked in direct services for the past six years. His personal experiences and insights have been shared through various platform, including the Huffington Post, where he has written several impactful articles. Furthermore, Niko provided written testimony for a U.S. Senate Hearing on February 24, 2015, in support of amendments S.166 and S.178, advocating for the inclusion of LGBT youth victims. Niko is also prominently featured in the Office for Victims of Crime's "Faces of Human Trafficking" training videos, which aim to educate and raise awareness about the complexities and realities of human trafficking.*

Participating in the "Faces of Human Trafficking" video series was an honor. It provided me with a platform in this movement. As one of the first males and the first gay male survivor to go public about being a sex trafficking victim, this project challenged gender stereotypes and paved the way for LGBT youth to be recognized as victims too.

Through years of community-based work and outreach, I have identified a pressing need to redirect funds from awareness campaigns to direct services, specifically those provided by survivor-led NGOs. These organizations are crucial in offering community-based social services, and a comprehensive, client-centered program is necessary to help survivors achieve their goals from start to finish.

***“As a case worker, I observed flaws in the structure of direct services. During night outreach, clients often seek drug treatment but face obstacles like unavailable beds, changes in referral systems, insurance issues, and programs running on a 9-5 schedule. This system seems designed by someone with no real-life experience”***

Services should center more on the one-stop shop model. This model covers all clients' needs in one location, saving time and being cost-effective. It would include drop-in centers and residential programs tailored to individuals, providing a safe space for services, medical care, and support.

There is also a need for more medical detox and multi-phase residential treatment programs that include job training and preparation for independent living. These facilities should also feature commercial-grade kitchens for life skill classes and meal prepping, essential for educating survivors about nutrition and understanding the impact of trauma on their overall health. Many survivors avoid emergency rooms due to lack of insurance or mistreatment by staff.

By implementing these strategies, we can provide comprehensive care and support for survivors of human trafficking, helping them rebuild their lives and achieve lasting independence.