



## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

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Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB 206: Criminal Procedure – Motion to Vacate Judgment – Human Trafficking (True Freedom Act of 2020)

- Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice-Chair and members of the committee, my name is Andrea Nunez. I am the Manager of Office of Human Trafficking Prevention from the Department of Community Resources and Services in Howard County and very glad to be here in enthusiastic support of this bill on behalf of my County Executive, Dr. Calvin Ball.
- County Executive Ball and I want to thank Senator Lee for her tireless advocacy and strong leadership on this bill.
- By force, fraud or coercion, traffickers exploit their victims for profit and often compel their victims to commit certain crimes, like engage in commercial sex work, drug possession, trespass, and theft.
- This bill seeks to vacate criminal convictions that survivors accumulated when they were being trafficked.
- As you heard from the first panel, criminal records frequently prevent survivors from getting jobs, signing leases or otherwise securing a place to live on their own, prohibiting them from rebuilding their lives - healthy and productive lives.
- I work with several leading nonprofits that directly serve trafficking survivors across our region, including Hopeworks of Howard County, which confirms that this happens to a significant number of their clients.
- Whether the survivor is coming out of Hopeworks' emergency shelter after a couple of months, transitional housing or has a temporary place to stay on their own, their criminal records from the time they were trafficked consistently present a big barrier to securing employment and stable long-term housing.
- Not only will this bill will be a huge step forward in helping survivors, it'll finally put Maryland on par with just about every other state in the country in terms of making this limited remedy available to survivors.
- On our Statewide and County task forces, we're doing a lot of great collaborative work on trafficking across the state. We're having a number of conversations about workforce development and housing options for survivors beyond just emergency shelter. In partnership with our outstanding service providers across the region, we can and will continue to help survivors with these challenges.

*The Department of Community Resources and Services provides vital human services through its offices of ADA Coordination, Aging and Independence, Children and Families, Community Partnerships, Consumer Protection, Human Trafficking Prevention, Local Children's Board, and Veterans and Military Families.*

- This bill will greatly increase the opportunity for these survivors to take advantage of them.
- We desperately need YOUR help modernizing this important criminal statute.
- Thank you for your time, Howard County Executive Ball respectfully urges a favorable report.