

BILL NO: House Bill 892
TITLE: Criminal Law – Benefits Trafficking
COMMITTEE: Judiciary Committee
HEARING DATE: February 20 at 1 pm
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

I am the Executive Director of The Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, representing the interests of the over 750 crime victims from Baltimore City that ROAR has assisted since our inception in June 2019. ROAR is a “one-stop-shop” in Baltimore City where survivors of crime can access a full range of wraparound legal, mental health, case management and nurse care management services in one place, which research has shown provides the best outcomes for survivors who are often managing myriad and complex needs. ROAR aims to co-create with survivors a community in which people who experience crime or systemic injustice are empowered to achieve their own sense of justice, healing, and well-being. ROAR’s mission is to engage with individuals and communities in Baltimore City by providing holistic, client-driven services to survivors of crime and influencing efforts to reform systemic responses to crime. **ROAR urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 892.**

At ROAR we assist victims of all types of crime, abuse, and harm who live or were harmed in Baltimore City, including survivors of human trafficking. Survivors of sex and labor trafficking endure unimaginable harm, with reverberations far beyond becoming “free” of the trafficker. ROAR has served numerous human trafficking survivors who are the complaining witness in the prosecution of their trafficker under the current criminal code, and the types of charges that can be brought are narrow and do not encompass so much of the acts to which they were subjected. This critical piece of legislation would give prosecutors the necessary tools to charge and convict people who prey on others, especially those who are vulnerable already. Traffickers intentionally prey upon those who are most vulnerable, whether that be because they are young, unhoused, living in poverty, use substances, have mental health disorders, lack legal immigration status, or simply trust the person who deserves it least. These survivors deserve justice, and those that harm them in such egregious ways need to be held accountable. This bill, if passed, would make that much more likely.

For the above stated reasons, **ROAR urges a favorable report on HB 892.**