



BILL NUMBER: HB 771

TITLE: Health Occupations - Human Trafficking Awareness Training

COMMITTEE: Health

HEARING DATE: 2/25/2026

POSITION: FAV

TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County and a comprehensive domestic violence service provider, offering crisis response, survivor-centered advocacy, legal referrals, trauma-informed therapy, and community education. TurnAround also serves as the Regional Navigator for Baltimore County and Howard County, providing specialized services to survivors of human trafficking, and is a member of the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV), and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF).

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee brings together federal, state, and local law enforcement, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to identify and support survivors and hold traffickers accountable. Its Legislative Subcommittee—comprised of representatives from law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, service providers, government entities, and faith-based partners—works to strengthen Maryland’s human trafficking laws, collaborate with legislators, and provide testimony on key legislation each session. On behalf of TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 771.

HB 771 strengthens Maryland’s response to human trafficking by integrating standardized, trauma-informed awareness training into the continuing education framework for health care practitioners across health occupations boards. Survivors frequently interact with the health care system while they are still under the control of traffickers, often in emergency departments, urgent care, primary care, dental settings, and behavioral health services, yet their exploitation is routinely missed because providers are not trained to recognize the indicators of trafficking or respond safely. By ensuring that human trafficking awareness training is recognized for continuing education credit and proactively promoted by each health occupations board, HB 771 leverages an existing regulatory structure to reach a broad cross-section of clinicians who are uniquely positioned to identify, support, and refer potential victims to services.

The bill appropriately requires every health occupations board to (1) adopt regulations allowing applicants for license or certificate renewal to receive continuing education credits for completing an approved human trafficking awareness training program and (2) conduct outreach so that regulated professionals are aware of available training options, including through general board communications and board websites. This approach minimizes administrative burden while embedding trafficking awareness into ongoing professional development that practitioners must complete as part of their licensure obligations. Consistent, visible outreach by the boards will normalize trafficking education as a standard of care rather than an optional or ad hoc training.

HB 771 also establishes thoughtful, survivor-centered minimum standards for the training itself. The program must be at least one hour in duration, be readily accessible, and be provided free of charge to licensees and certificate holders, thereby removing cost and access barriers that might otherwise discourage participation. The training content must include: (1) definitions and forms of sex and labor trafficking under federal and State law; (2) an understanding of the trauma-informed care model; (3) physical, behavioral, and emotional indicators of human trafficking, particularly as they present in health care settings; (4) appropriate screening protocols and documentation methods; (5) mandatory reporting requirements under State law and established protocols for reporting suspected trafficking, including to the National Human Trafficking Hotline; and (6) available federal, State, and local resources and services for survivors. These elements are essential for ensuring that providers not only recognize red flags but also respond in a manner that is legally compliant, trauma-informed, and connected to concrete support.

We further support the bill's requirement that the Maryland Department of Health approve the training program in collaboration with a local university and in consultation with the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force and organizations that provide direct services to survivors. Involving a Maryland-based university with public health, law, or social work expertise, as well as the MDHTTF and frontline service providers, will help ensure that the curriculum is evidence-informed, multidisciplinary, and rooted in current best practices and survivor-centered approaches. This collaborative design process reduces the risk of outdated, incomplete, or harmful content and promotes a consistent statewide standard that can be adapted across different health professions.

Finally, HB 771 includes clear timelines for implementation, directing the Maryland Department of Health to approve the training program by July 1, 2026, and requiring each health occupations board to adopt necessary regulations by October 1, 2026. These deadlines reflect the urgency of improving identification and response in health care settings while providing sufficient time for stakeholder collaboration, curriculum development, and regulatory action. In our view, timely implementation of HB 771 will meaningfully enhance Maryland's ability to prevent, identify,

and respond to human trafficking and will complement existing statutory and programmatic efforts, including victim services, law enforcement initiatives, and public awareness campaigns. For these reasons, TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urge the Finance Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 771.

For further inquiries, please contact Amanda Rodriguez, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, TurnAround, Inc., and Chair, MDHTTF Legislative Subcommittee, at arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org.