



Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair
Delegate Jessica Feldmark, Vice Chair
Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
131 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee,

RE: HB 355 Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 Maryland school psychologists. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state. School psychologists play a vital role in school communities. Our key mandated responsibilities include implementing and adhering to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (504), among others, to ensure all children can access a free and appropriate public education. **MSPA asks the House Ways and Means Committee to report FAVORABLY on HB 355.**

Human trafficking is a \$150 Billion industry, and estimates range from 27-41 million victims worldwide. It does not discriminate on race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background, and it hides in plain sight. The aim of this bill is to bring it out of the darkness, so it can no longer hide.

Trafficking is able to thrive, because most people do not know how to identify trafficking when they see it. Youth do not know how to identify the red flags that will lure them into trafficking schemes. Misleading information on social media makes them think traffickers are coming to kidnap them off the streets, but that is rarely the case. Trafficking is a business, and it functions by luring young people in through grooming. Middle-schoolers are the perfect age to be educated about the way traffickers operate, so that they can avoid falling into their traps.

Providing this three-year program will instill accurate and life-saving information into Maryland youth, hopefully preventing them from being lured into a life from which they may never recover. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 355. If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact MSPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Grubb, at legislative@mSPAonline.org

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Grubb PhD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura M. Grubb, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA

Chair, MSPA Legislative Committee