



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Delegate Dereck E. Davis, Chairman
House Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building, Room 231
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony IN SUPPORT of HB 382: Business Records – Innkeepers - Records and Human Trafficking Awareness Training

Dear Chairman Davis,

It often comes as a surprise that individuals of all ages and backgrounds are regularly bought and sold across the state of Maryland. Hotels at all price points are often hotspots for illegal sex trafficking. House Bill 382 would require staff training and establish a baseline of awareness and preparation at all lodging establishments to spot red flags and potential cases of human trafficking.

For years, Howard County Police have diligently investigated sex trafficking cases at hotels within the County. Although *Backpage* is no longer active, several similar websites continuously post advertisements for sex leading interested buyers seeking arrangements and typically utilizing hotels rooms. *Hopeworks* of Howard County, a non-profit which provides housing and case management services to survivors of trafficking, confirms a significant number of their clients were trafficked in hotels in the region. In addition to hotel management, all workers should be uniformly taught what defines human trafficking, how to spot red flags and how to safely react and report. Hotel employees, in various departments such as housekeeping, front desk, security, maintenance and food service, are all well-positioned to observe signs of trafficking occurring in hotel rooms or labor trafficking of other workers.

There has been a strong, statewide effort in recent years to train law enforcement and the public on identifying and preventing human trafficking. Thanks to the efforts of Delegate Ebersole and the passage of HB 5 in 2019, Maryland now requires training on trafficking for truck drivers upon receiving their commercial licenses. In Howard County we are continuing to raise awareness throughout County agencies and frequently partnering with our school system to give presentations to educators, staff, students and parents.

While some industry leaders like Marriott Hotels have already adopted human trafficking training measures for hotel staff, it has not yet become a widespread best practice. In Howard County, we aspire to eradicate human trafficking and this bill is another incremental step toward increased detection of trafficking cases leading to more prosecutions of traffickers while providing more resources and justice for survivors.

I welcome your partnership on this critical bill and respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 382.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive