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BILL NO: Senate Bill 742  
TITLE: Labor and Employment – Fair Recruitment and Transparency Act  
COMMITTEE: Finance  
HEARING DATE: February 27, 2020  
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

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The Women's Law Center (WLC) supports Senate Bill 742 because it will enhance Maryland's ability to protect foreign workers legally entering the United States from human trafficking and other human rights abuses. The incidence of known human trafficking cases involving foreign labor recruiters is increasing dramatically in the United States. While many foreign labor recruiters behave ethically and are engaged in lawful conduct, a growing percentage are often complicit with, or directly involved in, trafficking of workers.

Unscrupulous recruiters commonly lure foreign workers to the United States by misrepresenting the terms of employment. Recruiters frequently charge guest workers exorbitant fees to facilitate placement with U.S. employers. When workers arrive in the U.S. indebted, they remain in abusive or exploitative working conditions under debt bondage or other forms of modern slavery. Recruiters also circumvent anti-discrimination laws, defraud U.S. visa programs, weaken workplace protections for all workers, and retaliate against workers who complain about unlawful treatment.

Senate Bill 742 would:

- Eliminate debt bondage by prohibiting foreign labor recruiters from charging workers any costs, fees, or expenses and require fee repayment and hiring if a worker reports having been charged fees.
- Promote transparency and accountability by requiring foreign labor recruiters to be licensed, ensuring competency and ethical standards.
- Create a public registry of all foreign labor contractors so that workers can verify the recruiter's identity and job location.
- Require foreign labor recruiters to provide workers with a signed contract, at the time of recruitment, detailing the terms of employment and in the primary language of the worker.
- Create a J-1 Workgroup to study the program in Maryland.

Senate Bill 742 would make foreign workers less vulnerable to the crime of human trafficking by increasing the regulation of foreign labor recruiters. Therefore, the WLC supports Senate Bill 742 and urges a favorable report.

***The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The Women's Law Center operates three hotlines, Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County, and the statewide Collateral Legal Assistance for Survivors and Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Projects.***