



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

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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 338: Business Records – Innkeepers - Records and Human Trafficking Awareness Training

Dear Chair Davis,

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice-Chair and members of the committee, my name is Andrea Nunez. I am the Manager of Office of Human Trafficking Prevention from the Department of Community Resources and Services in Howard County and very glad to be here in support of this bill on behalf of Howard County Executive, Dr. Calvin Ball.

County Executive Ball would like to thank Delegate Ebersole for his strong leadership on this bill and for being a steady voice on behalf of building awareness to prevent human trafficking in Maryland.

While many of you know, it often comes as a surprise to many, that people are regularly bought and sold across the state of Maryland. It is well-established that hotels are hotspots for sex trafficking. Hotels and motels at all price points are used, these activities are not limited to lower priced establishments. Although *Backpage* is no longer around, several other websites have taken its place. On these websites advertisements for sex are continuously posted, leading to communications with interested buyers seeking to arrange meetings to engage in sex acts for money. The location is quite often a hotel room.

For years, Howard County Police have investigated sex trafficking cases at hotels throughout the County. Just last week, our State's Attorney successfully prosecuted a case against a trafficker who was trafficking multiple adult female victims from a hotel in Elkridge. Earlier this month Howard County Police arrested nine adult men attempting to buy sex at a different hotel in Jessup. *Hopeworks* of Howard County, which provides housing and case management services to survivors of trafficking, confirms a significant number of their clients were trafficked in hotels. Additionally, and often less frequently detected, nationwide, there are reported cases of labor trafficking of hotel employees and contractors.

Housekeeping, front desk, security, maintenance and food service staff are all well-positioned to observe signs of trafficking occurring in hotel rooms or labor trafficking of other workers.

The Department of Community Resources and Services provides vital human services through its offices of ADA Coordination, Aging and Independence, Children and Families, Community Partnerships, Consumer Protection, Human Trafficking Prevention, Local Children's Board, and Veterans and Military Families.



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In addition to hotel management, all workers should be uniformly taught about what trafficking is, what the red flags are, and how to safely react and report.

There has been a strong effort in recent years to train law enforcement around the state on trafficking, and thanks to Delegate Ebersole's bill last year, Maryland now requires training on trafficking for truck drivers when they get their commercial licenses. In Howard County we're continuing to raise awareness throughout County agencies on trafficking. For example, we partner frequently with our school system to give presentations on trafficking to educators and staff, students and parents. Similar collaborative efforts to conduct training and raise awareness are happening through our statewide and county task forces.

The time is right to extend this push for increased awareness and basic training to one of the most frequent destinations for trafficking: our hotels and other lodging establishments. While there are some wonderful industry leaders like Marriott that have already adopted training for hotel staff on trafficking, it is not commonplace throughout the industry. Some establishments need this kind of mandate to be incentivized into action. This bill will establish a baseline of awareness and staff preparation at all lodging establishments. This another good incremental step forward towards increased detection of trafficking cases, leading to more prosecutions of traffickers and services provided to survivors.

Thank you for your time, Howard County Executive Ball respectfully urges a favorable report.

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