

Favorable Written Testimony

HB 270

Stacy Amparo, Assistant State's Attorney for Baltimore County

Today I write in favor of House Bill 270. I've been the sole prosecutor handling both felony and misdemeanor human trafficking cases in Baltimore County since 2015. Part of my duties have included directing investigations for these types of cases to ensure a successful prosecution. I have worked alongside detectives from the Child Exploitation task force, Baltimore County Police, and Maryland State Police. We all know that these crimes tend to occur in secret in hotels and motels easily evading detection. The victims of human trafficking who have endured years of trauma are not forthcoming with investigators about their traffickers' identity for fear of retaliation. One of the most valuable tools investigators possess are hotel/motel records. During the investigation stage of a human trafficking case, invaluable information and investigative leads can be gathered from one page of hotel records. Often times, just an email address may lead to a suspect. Other times, financial information can be subpoenaed from these records. The wealth of information that can be gained from obtaining what room was used when can be a real time lead for detectives when conducting surveillance.

During the prosecution phase survivors of trafficking come forward and proceed to trial, they are often times deemed untrustworthy by their peers. Hotel records can assist in corroborating the statements of survivors and lend much needed credibility. Often times survivors of human trafficking may remember the room number of a specific hotel, as well as

the dates of the hotel stay. It is powerful evidence to show the hotel records to a jury with that same exact information a survivor is testifying about.

Often times, in Baltimore County some of the smaller hotel/motel establishments do not keep records. Unfortunately these are also the hotel/motels that turn a blind eye to trafficking at their establishments. Traffickers know that they can utilize these establishments and remain undetected. Record keeping means accountability for smaller hotels and motels. In addition to training staff to know the signs of trafficking, we are ensuring that these businesses aren't operating in the dark. Members of the community expect this type of accountability on the part of these businesses.