



VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

February 3, 2022

The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support – SB91 - Business Regulation - Innkeepers - Maintenance of Guest Records and Employee Human Trafficking Awareness Training and Policy

Dear Chairman Kelley:

Senate Bill 91 requires an innkeeper to establish and maintain a computerized record-keeping system for guest transactions and receipts as well as creating a requirement for the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services and the Maryland Department of Labor to approve educational training programs for the accurate and prompt identification and reporting of suspected human trafficking. It also requires an innkeeper to take certain actions to provide employees with training on the prevention, identification, and reporting of human trafficking.

The Montgomery County Victim Services Advisory Board advises the County Council and County Executive on assisting the needs of victims of a broad range of violent crimes, including rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The number and severity of sexual assault and domestic violence cases referred to the Montgomery County HHS Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program and the Abused Persons Program has continued to increase substantially during the pandemic, with more than 1800 requests for help in FY21 and 500 requests already received during the first quarter of FY 22. More than 2,500 domestic violence protective order petitions were filed in Montgomery County District Court in 2021. The severity of cases has also become more critical, with increases in homicides, domestic violence, sexual violence, and more reports of strangulations.

Also known as “modern slavery,” human trafficking is the illegal trade in human beings through recruitment or abduction by means of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of forced labor, debt bondage or sexual exploitation. According to the U.S. Department of States’ “2021 Trafficking in Persons Report,” misconceptions about human trafficking have helped fabrication and falsehoods run rampant through social media platforms and the public. This is immensely detrimental to organizations and individuals who are attempting to combat this very real and very serious problem. Senate Bill 91 will apprise and educate innkeepers’ and their staff on the intricacies of preventing, identifying, and reporting of human trafficking while also requiring record keeping. These small requirements and actions can make an immense impact in the fight against human trafficking.

VSAB asks the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 91.

Sincerely,

Neda Bolourian
VSAB Member

Department of Health and Human Services