



————— Montgomery County, MD —————
**HUMAN TRAFFICKING
PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

February 15, 2022

Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
101 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 833 Criminal Law – Victims of Child Sex Trafficking – Safe Harbor and Service Response
Position: Support

Dear Chairperson Clippinger and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

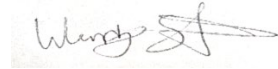
On behalf of the Montgomery County Human Trafficking Prevention Committee (HTPC), I am writing in support of HB 833—Victims of Child Sex Trafficking—Safe Harbor Service Response. The HTPC was originally formed as a task force in 2014 and later transitioned into a Committee via legislation in 2017. The purpose of the HTPC is to educate the community about human trafficking and to reduce and prevent its occurrence.

HB 833 is a simple bill that provides a safe harbor for child victims of sex trafficking and prevents further victimization by connecting children to services needed through the already established regional navigator program. (Legislation was passed in 2019 that established the regional navigator program that connects child survivors of trafficking to necessary services.) This bill will assist child sex trafficking victims by preventing them from being criminalized for being a victim. Children, would instead, receive services and assistance. The bill also prevents any criminal or delinquent charges that might be brought against them because they are a victim of trafficking.

Unfortunately, children can be charged in the criminal or juvenile justice system for acts that are directly related to their victimization including prostitution and other related offenses. Children are, by law, considered victims of human trafficking per se if they are engaging in sex work; however, unlike any other victimization, they can also be charged for the very act that makes them a victim. This paradox in the criminal justice system leads to further victimization both as children, but often leads to further abuse as adults.

It is critical that children receive the help needed in order to stop the cycle of abuse and to end the horrific practice of child sex trafficking. We urge a favorable report on HB 833.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wendy Stickle", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Wendy Stickle
Chair
Montgomery County Human Trafficking Prevention Committee