



**BILL NUMBER:** House Bill 194

**TITLE:** Education - Family Life and Human Sexuality Curriculum – Sexting

**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means

**HEARING DATE:** January 27, 2022

**POSITION:** FAVORABLE

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The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF) and its members respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 194.

House Bill 194 requires age-appropriate instruction on the risks of sexting as part of the Family Life and Human Sexuality curriculum in every grade in which the curriculum is taught in public schools in the county, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. It is critical that we educate our young people about healthy sexual behaviors as well as unhealthy relationships and consent. Sexting can be a part of a consensual, healthy relationship. However, it can be used to exploit others as well. With so many children having access to technology it is our responsibility to educate them at a young age. One of the ways to prevent victimization is to educate and encourage healthy behaviors in relationships.

There are numerous and varied insidious ways that a trafficker can victimize a person, and traffickers adapt to and increasingly use new technological methods such as sexting to ensnare and entangle victims. The sexting law that was enacted during the 2021 legislative session importantly distinguished sexting used to victimize or the result of coercion, threats, or intimidation.

The MDHTTF believes that HB 194 and the education required can serve as a preventative measure and hopefully prevent victimization and urges a favorable report.

For more information, please contact Amanda Rodriguez at [arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org](mailto:arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org) or Melanie Shapiro at [mshapiro@mnadv.org](mailto:mshapiro@mnadv.org), co-chairs of the Legislative Committee of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force.

**About MDHTTF:** Formed in 2007 by the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the Attorney General of Maryland, and the State’s Attorney for Baltimore City, MDHTTF serves as the lead investigative, prosecutorial, and victim services coordinating body for anti-human trafficking activity in the State of Maryland. MDHTTF has grown to include most law enforcement agencies in the State, all child-serving state agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Homeland Security Investigations, most local State’s Attorney’s Offices, and dozens of victim service agencies. MDHTTF is comprised of five committees – legislative, law enforcement, victim services, public awareness, and training. During this time, MDHTTF has grown a robust understanding of the issue of human trafficking in Maryland.

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