

Testimony of the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

BILL NO:	Senate Bill 199
TITLE:	Primary and Secondary Education – Comprehensive Health Education Framework – Established Education, Energy, and the Environment
COMMITTEE:	and the Environment
HEARING DATE:	February 8, 2023
POSITION:	SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Senate Bill 199 would require the State Department of Education, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health, to develop a comprehensive health education framework. This framework must include certain topics including safety and violence prevention. The bill also requires a committee review and comment on the curriculum. The Human Trafficking Prevention Project (“HTPP”) at the University of Baltimore School of Law supports this bill because school-based education is a crucial component of preventing human trafficking.

In addition to directly addressing the harms of human trafficking after it has already occurred, the Human Trafficking Prevention Project also focuses on supporting systemic advocacy designed to prevent human trafficking before it occurs. In the case of HB 119, the development of a multi-pronged approach designed to address some of the most common predictors of human trafficking, such as healthy relationships and online safety, is crucial. The CDC states that “[s]ocial-emotional learning programs for youth promote expectations for mutually respectful, caring, non-violent relationships among young people and work with youth to help them develop social-emotional skills such as empathy, respect, and healthy communication and conflict resolution skills.”¹

While the current comprehensive health education framework was recently updated and includes many important topics, it does not include *education on the safe and healthy use of technology and online communications to avoid violence and exploitation*. The HTPP joins its coalition partners in suggesting that amendment language be included to specify that these topics must be included in the comprehensive health education framework in addition to the requirement that there be *education on healthy and non-violent relationships*. In addition, the committee established to review the curriculum does not include subject matter experts, so the HTPP also suggests that *subject matter experts be included in the creation of curriculum* to ensure that it reflects the most recent research and best practices in the necessary areas of instruction.

In recent years, Maryland has begun to show its support for *preventing* human trafficking by addressing the societal challenges that make Marylanders more vulnerable to being trafficked. Senate Bill 199 would further this goal by prioritizing health education information that prioritizes the development of healthy relationships, online safety, and the like. **For these reasons, the Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports SB 199, and respectfully urges a favorable report with amendments.**

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-technicalpackages.pdf>.