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MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Matthew J. Fader
Chief Justice

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: House Bill 297
Criminal Law – Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human
Trafficking – Safe Harbor and Service Response
DATE: February 1, 2023
(2/9)
POSITION: Support

The Maryland Judiciary supports House Bill 297. This bill would amend the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article, the Criminal Procedure Article, and the Family Law Article. It would change the required procedures for the police and the court when a child is alleged to have committed a delinquent act and the child might be a victim of sex trafficking. It also prohibits a youth from being detained for any offense for which an adult may petition the court for vacatur of a conviction on the basis of being trafficked, if the youth committed the act as a result of being trafficked.

The Judiciary supports the intention of the bill, and notes that legislation to support minors who have been victims of sex trafficking should be a priority. The proposed legislation provides an important step towards addressing the needs of minor victims of human trafficking. Maryland's lack of statutory protections for youth who commit delinquent acts as a direct result of being trafficked has been noted by advocacy groups such as Shared Hope International, a national nonprofit that performs in-depth analyses of each state's laws, services, and protections for victims of human trafficking.

cc. Hon. J. Sandy Bartlett
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor