

TESTIMONY FOR SB0297

Criminal Law - Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Bartlett

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

Person Submitting: Jared Schablein, Chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0297 on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive movement on the Lower Eastern Shore.

Children who are sex trafficking victims frequently face more than only the tragedy of what has occurred to them; they are also frequently detained and accused of delinquency or other crimes. A regional navigator must be notified by an officer who detains or arrests a child they suspect is a victim of sex trafficking so that the navigator can release the kid to their parents or guardians (unless doing so would put the child in additional danger) and alert the local child welfare agency.

The court, the kid's counsel, or the state's attorney will order a stay of proceedings if a child has already been charged before it is found that the child was a victim of sex trafficking. All charges will be dropped if it can be proven that the youngster committed the crime(s) while being coerced by sex traffickers. This is a much more compassionate method to handle a distressed child.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

