



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**SB 292**

**DATE: March 28, 2023**

**SPONSOR: Senator Waldstreicher, et al.**

**ASSIGNED TO: Judiciary**

**CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (Sara.Morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

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### **Criminal Law – Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking – Safe Harbor and Service Response**

Senate Bill 292 is a reintroduction of legislation that passed the House in 2022 but failed to advance in the Senate. This year, the Safe Harbor bill passed the Senate unanimously. The legislation will protect minors (17 years old and younger) who are victims of sex trafficking by prohibiting police officers from charging the child with a crime associated with being a victim of sex trafficking (e.g., prostitution, truancy, running away, etc.). It will also require that the police contact the regional navigator, the local child welfare services department and/or the child's parent/guardian (if deemed safe to do so). The bill will also prohibit the alleged victim from being detained in a juvenile detention facility. Montgomery County supports this legislation. It is a legislative priority of the Commission for Women, as well as the Maryland Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force and Montgomery County's Human Trafficking Task Force.

Maryland was recently ranked as one of the 10 worst states in the country to receive a failing grade in every category listed by the Shared Hope International 2021 report on child and youth sex trafficking. There is a gap in services for vulnerable minors who find themselves victimized due to unsafe familial environments, mental illness, substance use, stigma, and immigration issues. This bill will offer more safeguards to ensure these children are protected and that the right agencies are involved in their care.

Montgomery County supports Senate Bill 292 and urges that the Committee adopt a favorable report.