

Date: February 8, 2023

Bill number: SB0203

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Bill Title: **Maryland Department of Transportation – Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response**

DHS Position: **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide written information regarding Senate Bill 203 (SB 203).

Senate Bill 203 would raise awareness among transportation employees and contractors working at some of the most critical transportation junctures and intersections where child exploitation and human trafficking often occurs. Through the creation and implementation of a training program, the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) workforce would be intentionally trained in the identification and reporting of suspected child exploitation and human trafficking.

Senate Bill 203 aims to ensure contractors and employees in the transportation sector are better educated and trained to identify victims and be more vigilant within their workplace to witness children being exploited or trafficked. Senate Bill 203 would provide instruction and guidance to MDOT employees and contractors that frequently interact with this vulnerable population to quickly identify and report suspected trafficking to appropriate security staff, law enforcement, or the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline.

DHS serves as the state's primary social services agency and has the authority for statewide implementation of Child Protective Services (CPS) which includes sex trafficking investigations following the 2012 passage of Senate Bill 1082/House Bill 860, which made sex trafficking a form of child abuse. Currently, Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) are responsible for screening reports of children suspected to be victims of human trafficking.

As such, The Department of Human Services submits for the Committee's consideration that an amendment to §2-113 (E) include language that the appropriate law enforcement agency and/or the local Department of Social Services be included in any report made in cases where the suspected incident involves a minor.

DHS appreciates the opportunity to offer the aforementioned information for the Committee's consideration during your deliberations. DHS welcomes collaboration with the Committee on SB 203.