



Bill No: HB297  
Title: Criminal Law - Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response  
Committee: Judiciary  
Hearing: February 9, 2023  
Position: SUPPORT

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The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women’s groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW’s purpose is to advocate for legislation affecting women and families. To accomplish this goal, MLAW creates an annual legislative agenda with issues voted on by MLAW members and endorsed by organizations and individuals from all over Maryland. **HB297 - Criminal Law - Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response** is a priority on the [2023 MLAW Agenda](#) and we urge your support.

HB297 will provide a safe harbor for child victims of sex trafficking and prevent their further victimization by connecting them to rehabilitative and supportive services through the already established Regional Navigator program, while providing a pathway to prevent any criminal or delinquent charges brought against them that are directly related to their trafficking.

The majority of sex trafficking victims are women and girls. Currently in Maryland, children can be charged in the adult criminal or juvenile justice system for acts that are directly linked to their victimization, including prostitution and other related offenses.

This bill would provide a safe harbor for child victims of sex trafficking and prevent prosecution for acts committed as a result of their trafficking including prostitution and other related offenses. Legislation was passed in 2019 establishing the Regional Navigator program that connects child survivors of trafficking to necessary services. This bill will benefit women and girls by preventing them from being criminalized for acts they committed as a result of their trafficking victimization, and will support their healing rather than their continued punishment.

**For these reasons, MLAW strongly urges the passage of HB297.**

## MLAW 2023 Supporting Organizations

The following organizations have signed on in support of our 2023 Legislative Agenda\*:

AAUW Anne Arundel County  
AAUW Howard County  
AAUW Maryland  
Advocacy and Training Center  
Allegany County Women's Action Coalition  
Anne Arundel County NOW  
Aspire Ascend  
Baltimore County State Democratic Central Committee  
Bound for Better  
Business and Professional Women of Maryland  
Charles County Commission for Women  
Climate Xchange Maryland  
Drake Institute of Women's Policy  
Empowered Women in Business International  
ERA Coalition  
For All Seasons, Inc.  
Kensington-Rockville AAUW  
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)  
Maryland Commission for Women  
Maryland NOW  
Maryland WISE Women  
Miller Partnership Consultants LLC  
MoCoWoMen  
Montgomery County Business & Professional Women (MC BPW)  
Montgomery County Chapter, National Organization for Women  
Montgomery County Commission for Women  
Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Prince George's County Chapter  
National Women of Achievement, Inc.  
Planned Parenthood of Maryland  
Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, DC  
Reproductive Justice Inside  
Southern Prince George's Business and Professional Women  
Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., Prince George's County Chapter  
University of Baltimore School of Law If/When/How Chapter  
Women's Democratic League of Frederick County  
Women's Equity Center and Action Network (WE CAN)  
Women's Law Center of Maryland  
Zonta Club of Annapolis  
Zonta Club of Mid-Maryland

*\*as of 2/3/2023*

### **Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women**

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