

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure the budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.

SB0550 – Children – Labor Trafficking

Presented to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 16, 2024

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC) is a consortium of Maryland organizations and individuals formed in 1996 to promote meaningful child welfare reform.¹ **CPMC urges a favorable report on SB0550 – Children – Labor Trafficking.**

SB0550 adds child labor trafficking as a form of abuse and neglect and expands the scope of the Regional Navigators to include providing services to child victims of labor trafficking. In 2019, labor trafficking became a crime in the State of Maryland. That same year the Regional Navigators program was established to provide services for child victims of sex trafficking. SB0550 updates Maryland law to provide parity for child victims of sex trafficking and child victims of labor trafficking. It will assist in the identification of victims by requiring mandated reporters to report the labor trafficking abuse and connect child victims to the necessary services to escape.

Labor trafficking is different from both child sex trafficking and child labor law violations. Unlike child sex trafficking, in labor trafficking there must be a trafficker and force, fraud, or coercion. Force can include acts such as physical and/or sexual assaults, isolation, or confinement. Fraud can include lying about living situations, lying about work conditions, false promises about a relationship, withholding wages, or withholding important documents. Coercion can include threats of violence against the victim or their relatives, debt bondage, or threats of arrest. Child labor law violations occur when an employer hires a child to work in a job prohibited by statute due to the industry or the child works too many hours. There is a violation of state law but no force, fraud, or coercion. Child labor law violations are not included in SB0550.

We believe that ensuring that child victims of labor trafficking are connected to the Regional Navigators is critical to their safety and recovery. ***For these reasons, the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children urges a favorable report on SB0550.***

¹ CPMC Members in support of this position include: Board of Child Care, Center for Hope, Citizen's Review Board for Children, Maryland Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, MOMCares, National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter, Tim Briceland – Betts (individual), and Diana Philip (individual).