



DATE: February 13, 2024

BILL NUMBER: SB 550

POSITION: Favorable

The Frederick County Human Trafficking Response Team supports SB 550.

SB 550 acknowledges that labor trafficking of a minor is abuse or neglect of a child and further allows minor victims of labor trafficking to obtain necessary services for their victimization by referring them to the regional navigator.

Frederick County established the Human Trafficking Response Team in 2018. We have had a Regional Navigator, housed at Heartly House, since 2021. While the Regional Navigator program has proven to be an essential tool for providing necessary services to victims of sex trafficking, a whole subset of victims of human trafficking are left behind and are not receiving services by not acknowledging labor trafficking in the Regional Navigator Program.

Including labor trafficking as a recognized form of child abuse and neglect in the Family Law Article will also make such instances a mandatory report. This will assist with the identification of minor victims of labor trafficking and allow the appropriate response by Child Protective Services and the Department of Social Services.

Maryland has large number of youth who are vulnerable to labor trafficking. Based on data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, in 2021, 93% of the labor trafficking victims reported recent migration or relocation.¹ From October 2023 through December 2023, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) resettled over 1200 unaccompanied minor children in Maryland.² Relocated minors are more vulnerable to labor trafficking than other populations due to a multitude of factors.

¹ Polaris Analysis of 2021 Data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Polaris-Analysis-of-2021-Data-from-the-National-Human-Trafficking-Hotline.pdf> (last visited Feb. 13, 2024).

² Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State, Office of Refugee Resettlement, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state> (Feb. 8, 2024).

By issuing a favorable report on SB 550, this committee recognizes the need to appropriately acknowledge labor trafficking as abuse and neglect of children and provide the minor victims of labor trafficking the services they desperately need through the Regional Navigator Program.

For these reasons, the Frederick County Human Trafficking Response Team requests a favorable report on SB 550.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L.M. Carpenter', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lindsey M. Carpenter

Chair

Frederick County Human Trafficking
Response Team