

SB550 - Labor Trafficking - BCC Testimony 02.16.24

Uploaded by: Andrea Carroll

Position: FAV



SB550

Children - Labor Trafficking

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Hearing Date: February 16, 2024

POSITION: SUPPORT

My name is Andrea Carroll, and I am the Director of Behavioral Health Services at Board of Child Care (BCC). I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of BCC regarding *SB550 Children – Labor Trafficking* to encourage your support of this bill.

BCC provides a continuum of services to youth and families across Maryland. We have locations in six counties and provide care to hundreds of families each year through community-based, residential, and educational programs. The youth we serve are at high risk for human trafficking due to complex trauma and abuse histories, behavioral health challenges, developmental delays, out of home placements, poverty, and immigration status. We have dedicated trauma-responsive services for survivors of sex trafficking in our high intensity residential program, Caminos shelter and home study post release services programs, and our Anne Arundel County community-based Regional Navigator Program (RNP).

While our RNP was created to serve survivors of sex trafficking, our hope is to end all trafficking in Anne Arundel County through education, identification, and connection to resources. We do the best we can to meet the needs of labor trafficking victims referred to our program but need the full support of the law to better identify these youth and connect them to necessary resources.

We need to achieve parity for labor trafficking survivors.

Our vision for Maryland is that every young person who is a victim of human trafficking is able to access services immediately. In 2019, Maryland passed the *Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019*, creating the Regional Navigator program and ensuring that every sex-trafficked individual under age 25 has access to local and specialized services. Since then, the program has expanded statewide, and countless minors and young adult victims of sex trafficking have been served by specialized, trauma-informed providers.

While this important legislation has moved us closer towards our goal of serving every young victim of human trafficking, we need to close the gap for labor trafficking survivors.

Maryland youth are not adequately protected from labor trafficking.

There is a high number of youth vulnerable to labor trafficking in Maryland. Maryland has received the fifth-greatest number of unaccompanied children (UACs) since FY15.¹ In the first two months of FY24 alone

¹ Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2023, December 28). Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state>

(October 1, 2023-November 30, 2023), Maryland resettled 616 UACs in Prince George's County, Montgomery County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County.² Because of their lack of access to language, social services, education on workers' rights, and legal work opportunities, UACs and other foreign nationals are disproportionately vulnerable to labor trafficking. In fact, of the 15,886 victims of labor trafficking identified through the National Human Trafficking Hotline from 2018-2020, 92% were foreign nationals.³ For this reason alone, it is imperative that Regional Navigators, who currently serve only young victims of sex trafficking, expand to include young victims of labor trafficking, too.

Despite the abusive and exploitative nature of labor trafficking, unlike sex trafficking, labor trafficking of minors is not currently a recognized form of child abuse or neglect. This means that as a state, we are not protecting and are grossly underestimating the number of abused children in our communities. SB550 would change this, defining labor trafficking as a form of child abuse and neglect, therefore a mandated report, ensuring that the most vulnerable among us are connected to critical legal, mental health, and social services.

Housing resources are a primary need for human trafficking survivors.

Currently, funding for housing, including rental assistance, is an unallowable cost under the Regional Navigator Program. In Maryland, we have found that minor and young adult victims of sex and labor trafficking often lack safe housing options during and after their trafficking. Many of these young victims live in poverty, which is both a root cause and outcome of human trafficking, making housing stability even more out of reach. In response to this need, SB550 would expand Regional Navigator funding to allow for housing costs, which is often one of the most fundamental and foundational needs of victims.

SB550 will strengthen existing Maryland law to support child trafficking survivors by ensuring protections and resources for youth who are impacted by labor trafficking, as well as increase access to safe housing resources for all young survivors of trafficking.

For all the above reasons, Board of Child Care supports SB550, with confidence that it would continue to move Maryland towards our goal of connecting every young victim of both sex *and* labor trafficking immediately to the services they need.

Sincerely,



Andrea Carroll, LCPC
Director of Behavioral Health Services
Board of Child Care
acarroll@boardofchildcare.org

² Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2023, December 28). Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by County. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-county>

³ Polaris. (2023, September 27). Labor Trafficking on Specific Temporary Work Visas Report. A Data Analysis: 2018-2020. <https://polarisproject.org/labor-trafficking-on-specific-temporary-work-visas-report/>

SB0550_Children_Labor_Trafficking_MLC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0550 Children - Labor Trafficking

Bill Sponsor: Senator Sydnor

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0550 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

SB0550 expands the application of the Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response enacted in 2023 to include labor trafficking. It also adds a provision that limits the child being placed back with the offending parent or guardian.

Labor trafficking is an insidious form of human trafficking where victims – in this case, children – are forced to work or provide a service through the use of violence, deception, or coercion by their most trusted adult. Labor trafficking is a serious violation of human rights, regardless of the age of the victim. Children who are victims of labor trafficking often do not only have the horror of what has happened to them to contend with – they may be arrested and charged with delinquency or another criminal offence.

This bill will require that an officer who detains or arrests a child who that officer suspects is a victim of such trafficking must notify a regional navigator so that the navigator can release the child to a trusted care giver and get the services they need.

This is a much more humane way to treat a child who has already been traumatized

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

SB 550 Final Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Charles E. Sydnor III

Position: FAV

CHARLES E. SYDNOR III, ESQ.
Legislative District 44
Baltimore County

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee

Joint Committees

Administrative, Executive, and
Legislative Review

Children, Youth, and Families

Senate Chair, Legislative Ethics

Chair

Baltimore County Senate Delegation



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony for Senate Bill 550
Children - Labor Trafficking
February 16, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Smith, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I stand here before you in support of Senate Bill 550 (“SB 550”). For background, in 2019, we passed the *Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019*, creating the Regional Navigator program and ensuring that every sex-trafficked victim under the age of 25 has access to local and specialized services. Since then, the program has expanded statewide, and countless victims of sex trafficking have been served by specialized, trauma-informed providers.

In 2023, we passed *Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response*, decriminalizing prostitution, and a selection of other nonviolent offenses, for minors found to be victims of sex trafficking. While these important pieces of legislation have moved us closer towards the goal of helping young victims of human trafficking, we must work to close the gap for labor trafficking survivors—ensuring every young person who is a victim of human trafficking is able to access services immediately.

There is a high number of youth vulnerable to labor trafficking in Maryland. Maryland has received the fifth-greatest number of unaccompanied children (“UACs”) since FY15.¹ In the first few months of the 2024 fiscal year, Maryland has resettled 616 UACs in Prince George’s County, Montgomery County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County.² Because of their lack of access to language, social services, education on workers’ rights, and legal work opportunities, UACs and other foreign nationals are disproportionately vulnerable to labor trafficking. In fact, of the 15,886 victims of labor trafficking identified through the National Human Trafficking Hotline from 2018-

¹ Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2023, December 28). Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state>

² Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2023, December 28). Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by County. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-county>

2020, 92% were foreign nationals.³ For this reason alone, it is imperative that Regional Navigators, who currently serve only young victims of sex trafficking, expand to include young victims of labor trafficking, too.

Despite the abusive and exploitative nature of labor trafficking, unlike sex trafficking, labor trafficking of minors is not currently recognized as a form of child abuse or neglect. This means that as a state, we are not protecting and grossly underestimating the number of abused children in our communities. SB 550 would change this. SB 550 defines labor trafficking as a form of child abuse and neglect, therefore requiring a mandated report, thus ensuring that the most vulnerable among us are connected to critical legal, mental health, and social services.

Currently, funding for housing, including rental assistance, is an unallowable cost under the Regional Navigator Program. In Maryland, minor and young adult victims of sex and labor trafficking often lack options for where to live and with whom during and after their trafficking. Many of these young victims live in poverty, which is both a root cause and outcome of human trafficking, making housing stability even more out of reach. In response, SB 550 expands Regional Navigator funding to allow for housing costs, which is often one of the most fundamental and foundational needs of victims.

For all the above reasons, I ask that you support SB 550, with confidence that it would continue to move Maryland towards our goal of connecting every young victim of both sex *and* labor trafficking immediately to the services they need.

³ Polaris. (2023, September 27). Labor Trafficking on Specific Temporary Work Visas Report. A Data Analysis: 2018-2020. <https://polarisproject.org/labor-trafficking-on-specific-temporary-work-visas-report/>

SB0550 CPMC FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Diana Philip

Position: FAV

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).

SB 550- Children- Labor Trafficking- LOS.pdf

Uploaded by: Jane Krienke

Position: FAV



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 16, 2024

To: The Honorable William C. Smith Jr., Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Re: Letter of Support - Senate Bill 550 - Children - Labor Trafficking

Dear Chair Smith:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 550.

Across the state, hospital-based sexual assault forensic exam ([SAFE](#)) programs employ forensic nurse examiners. These registered nurses receive special training in evidence collection and are experts in delivering trauma-informed care to survivors of violence and abuse. State law ensures survivors of sexual assault have access to emergency medical treatment for their injuries with no out-of-pocket expense. Hospitals care for survivors of all forms of violence including children who have experienced sex and labor trafficking.

Senate Bill 550 would include survivors of child labor trafficking in the Safe Harbor Regional Navigator Grant Program. This program provides supportive trauma-informed services including safety planning, emergency response, basic living needs, trauma counseling, and mental health services, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, legal services, victim advocacy, and case management. Participation in the program would benefit any child survivors regardless of the form of trafficking.

Ensuring a strong safety net for survivors is essential to promote their health and well-being.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on SB 550.

For more information, please contact:

Jane Krienke, Senior Legislative Analyst, Government Affairs
Jkrienke@mhaonline.org

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB550.pdf

Uploaded by: Jenny Kraska

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 16, 2024

SB 550
Children – Labor Trafficking

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 508. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state’s second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Our vision for Maryland is that every young person who is a victim of human trafficking is able to access services immediately. In 2019, Maryland passed the *Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019*, creating the Regional Navigator program and ensuring that every sex-trafficked individual under age 25 has access to local and specialized services. Since then, the program has expanded statewide, and countless minors and young adult victims of sex trafficking have been served by specialized, trauma-informed providers. Pope Francis recently encouraged all efforts be made to combat the scourge of trafficking “*It is a call to take action, to mobilize all our resources in combating trafficking and restoring full dignity to those who have been its victims. If we close our eyes and ears, if we do nothing, we will be guilty of complicity.*”¹

In 2023, Maryland passed *Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response*, decriminalizing prostitution and a selection of other nonviolent offenses, for minors who are found to be victims of sex trafficking. While these important pieces of legislation have moved us closer towards our goal of serving every young victim of human trafficking, we need to close the gap for labor trafficking survivors.

¹ Pope Francis, 10th World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, Feb. 8, 2024

There is a high number of youth vulnerable to labor trafficking in Maryland. Maryland has received the fifth-greatest number of unaccompanied children (UACs) since FY15.² In the first two months of FY24 alone (October 1, 2023-November 30, 2023), Maryland has resettled 616 UACs in Prince George’s County, Montgomery County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County.³ Because of their lack of access to language, social services, education on workers’ rights, and legal work opportunities, UACs and other foreign nationals are disproportionately vulnerable to labor trafficking. In fact, of the 15,886 victims of labor trafficking identified through the National Human Trafficking Hotline from 2018-2020, 92% were foreign nationals.⁴ For this reason alone, it is imperative that Regional Navigators, who currently serve only young victims of sex trafficking, expand to include young victims of labor trafficking, too.

Despite the abusive and exploitative nature of labor trafficking, unlike sex trafficking, labor trafficking of minors is not currently a recognized form of child abuse or neglect. This means that as a state, we are not protecting and grossly underestimating the number of abused children in our communities. SB550 would change this, defining labor trafficking as a form of child abuse and neglect, therefore a mandated report, ensuring that the most vulnerable among us are connected to critical legal, mental health, and social services.

Currently, funding for housing, including rental assistance, is an unallowable cost under the Regional Navigator Program. In Maryland, we have found that minor and young adult victims of sex and labor trafficking often lack options for where to live and with whom during and after their trafficking. Many of these young victims live in poverty, which is both a root cause and outcome of human trafficking, making housing stability even more out of reach. In response to this need, SB550 would expand Regional Navigator funding to allow for housing costs, which is often one of the most fundamental and foundational needs of victims.

Thank you for your consideration, we respectfully request a favorable report on SB 550.

² Office of Refugee Resettlement . (2023, December 28). Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state>

³ Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2023, December 28). Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by County. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-county>

⁴ Polaris. (2023, September 27). Labor Trafficking on Specific Temporary Work Visas Report. A Data Analysis: 2018-2020. <https://polarisproject.org/labor-trafficking-on-specific-temporary-work-visas-report/>

HPP SB 550 Testimony- FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Jessica Emerson

Position: FAV

Testimony of the Human Trafficking Prevention Project

BILL NO: Senate Bill 550
TITLE: Children - Labor Trafficking
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: February 16, 2024
POSITION: **FAVORABLE**

Senate Bill 550 would add labor trafficking to Maryland’s definition of child abuse or neglect, thereby requiring a referral to the Safe Harbor Regional Navigator program under 5–704.3 of the Maryland Family Law Article.¹ Additionally, the legislation would expand Regional Navigator funding to allow for housing costs to be covered. The Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports this bill because it will continue to move Maryland towards our goal of connecting every minor victim of both sex *and* labor trafficking to the supportive services they need.

In 2019, Maryland passed the *Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019*, creating the Regional Navigator program and ensuring that every sex-trafficked individual under the age of 25 had access to specialized local services. Since then, the program has expanded statewide, and countless minors and young adult victims of sex trafficking have been served by specialized, trauma-informed service providers. In 2023, Maryland passed *Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response*, decriminalizing prostitution for minors providing a legal “exit ramp” out of the juvenile criminal legal system for survivors of trafficking charged with a select number of nonviolent offenses so that they can receive access to specialized services rather than be subject to incarceration for crimes they were forced to commit by their traffickers. While these important pieces of legislation have moved us closer towards our goal of serving every young victim of human trafficking, we need to close the gap for labor trafficking survivors.

There are a high number of youth made vulnerable to labor trafficking in Maryland. Maryland has received the fifth-greatest number of unaccompanied children (UACs) since FY15.² In the first two months of FY24 alone (October 1, 2023-November 30, 2023), Maryland has resettled 616 UACs in Prince George’s County, Montgomery County, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County.³ Because of their lack of access to social services, education on workers’ rights, and legal work opportunities, UACs and other foreign nationals are put at disproportionately high risk of labor trafficking. In fact, of the 15,886 victims of labor trafficking identified through the National Human Trafficking Hotline from 2018-2020, 92% were foreign nationals.⁴ For this reason alone, it is imperative that the legal mandate governing Regional Navigators, who are currently only legally required to serve young victims of sex trafficking, be expanded to include young victims of labor trafficking, too.

Additionally, it is important to note that funding for housing, including rental assistance, is currently an unallowable cost under the Regional Navigator Program.⁵ Lack of access to safe housing is both a predictor *and* a result of human trafficking, given that both adult and minor victims so often live in poverty, both before and after their victimization.⁶ As a result, SB 550 would expand Regional Navigator funding to allow for housing costs, which is often one of the most fundamental and foundational needs of victims.

¹ MD CODE ANN., FAM. LAW § 5-704.3 (West, 2019).

² Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2023, December 28). Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state>

³ Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2023, December 28). Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by County. The Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-county>

⁴ Polaris. (2023, September 27). Labor Trafficking on Specific Temporary Work Visas Report. A Data Analysis: 2018-2020. <https://polarisproject.org/labor-trafficking-on-specific-temporary-work-visas-report/>

⁵ MD CODE ANN., FAM. LAW § 5-704.3(e)(3) (West, 2019).

⁶ See generally Brittany Anthony et. al., *On-Ramps, Intersections, and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking* (2018), <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/A-Roadmap-for-Systems-and-Industries-to-Prevent-and-Disrupt-Human-Trafficking-Housing-and-Homelessness-Systems.pdf>.

Despite the abusive and exploitative nature of labor trafficking, the labor trafficking of minors is not currently a recognized form of child abuse or neglect. This means that, as a state, we are not protecting *and* grossly underestimating the number of abused children in our communities. SB 550 would change this, defining labor trafficking as a form of child abuse and neglect, and expanding the reach of Regional Navigator funding to include access to housing. For these reasons, the Human Trafficking Prevention Project supports Senate Bill 550 and respectfully urges a favorable report.

The Human Trafficking Prevention Project is dedicated to ending the criminalization of sex workers and survivors of human trafficking through access to civil legal services and support for policies that dismantle harmful systems and increase access to basic human rights and legal relief.

***For more information, please contact:
Jessica Emerson, LMSW, Esq.
Director, Human Trafficking Prevention Project
(E): jemerson@ubalt.edu***

SB 550 - WLCMD - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Laure Ruth

Position: FAV

BILL NO: Senate Bill 550
TITLE: Children – Labor Trafficking
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 16, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 550 would add labor trafficking to the list of conditions under which a local department of social services is authorized to ask a juvenile court to find that reasonable efforts to reunify a child with a parent or guardian are not required. It would also expand this body's 2023 Safe Harbor Legislation, which already has a regional navigator program, to apply to victims of child labor trafficking. The Women's Law Center of Maryland (WLC) supports SB 550 because it offers trauma-informed protections and services to labor trafficked youth that were created and already exist for sex trafficked youth.

Many youth in Maryland are at risk for labor trafficking. And many of them are at particular risk as they are foreign nationals who often do not have the language ability, resources, knowledge of laws, or access to legal work possibilities that may enable them to evade being labor trafficked. The Regional Navigator system is already set up to assist victims of sex trafficking and can offer the same assistance to labor trafficked children. SB 550 would define labor trafficking as a form of child abuse and neglect, causing mandated reporting and ensuring that the most vulnerable among us are connected to critical services. In addition, SB 550 would expand Regional Navigator funding to assist with housing costs, which is a crucial need for trafficked victims.

The WLC has had at least one case this past year where along with intimate partner violence, the perpetrator was labor trafficking his own teenaged children, forcing them to work for his company rather than attending school. This unconscionable action traumatized these children and put them behind educationally.

For these reasons, the WLC urges a favorable report for SB 550.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.

SB 550 - written testimony - labor trafficking.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsey Carpenter

Position: FAV



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. Carpenter', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lindsey M. Carpenter

Chair

Frederick County Human Trafficking
Response Team

2024 Written Testimony SB0550.pdf

Uploaded by: Lynn Mortoro

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0550
Children - Labor Trafficking**

Adding labor trafficking by a child's parent or guardian to the list of conditions under which a local department of social services is authorized to ask the juvenile court in a child in need of assistance proceeding to find that reasonable efforts to reunify a child with the child's parent or guardian are not required; and expanding provisions of law relating to the Safe Harbor Regional Navigator Grant Program to apply to child victims of labor trafficking.

FAVORABLE

February 16, 2024

TO: Chair Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

FROM: Lynn Mortoro, member, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network, Diocese of Maryland

DATE: February 16, 2024

Chair Senator W. C. Smith, Jr, Vice Chair Senator Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland strongly urges passage of SB0550. It has taken strong positions against child trafficking and is for any protections that are able to be legislated for children. Keeping them safe from those who were involved in the trafficking of these victims, even parents, is needed. Anything to protect them is what must happen.

As a parent and grandparent, I cannot think of a more vile act than to involve a child in this.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a favorable report

SB 550_MNADV_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Melanie Shapiro

Position: FAV



BILL NO: Senate Bill 550
TITLE: Children - Labor Trafficking
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: February 16, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 550.**

Senate Bill 550 adds child labor trafficking as a form of child 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. It was already a federal crime. That same year the Regional Navigators program was established to provide services for child victims of sex trafficking. SB 550 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 SB 550.

Ensuring that child victims of labor trafficking are connected to the Regional Navigators is critical to their safety and recovery.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on SB 550.**

For further information contact Melanie Shapiro ■ Public Policy Director ■ 301-852-3930 ■ mshapiro@mnadv.org

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SAFE Center Labor Trafficking Written Testimony_Se

Uploaded by: Sophie Aron

Position: FAV

BILL NO: HB 508/SB 550
TITLE: Children – Labor Trafficking
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: February 16, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment (SAFE) Center for Human Trafficking Survivors provides survivor-centered and trauma-informed services that empower trafficking survivors to heal and reclaim their lives. The SAFE Center offers a one-stop-shop for survivors of sex and labor trafficking of all nationalities, ages, and genders to access multi-disciplinary services, including four direct services programs: social services, legal, behavioral health, and economic empowerment. At present, one third of our clients are survivors of labor trafficking.

The SAFE Center aims to prevent trafficking and better serve trafficking survivors through research and policy advocacy. The SAFE Center is an initiative of the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: MPowering the State – a collaboration between the University of Maryland, Baltimore and the University of Maryland, College Park. We are part of the Graduate School, University of Maryland, Baltimore.

Our vision for Maryland is that every young person who is a victim of human trafficking is able to access services immediately. In 2019, Maryland passed the *Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019*, creating the Regional Navigator program and ensuring that every sex trafficked individual under age 25 has access to local and specialized services. Since 2019, the SAFE Center has served as the Regional Navigator in Montgomery County and since 2020, the Regional Navigator in Prince George’s County.

Despite the abusive and exploitative nature of labor trafficking, unlike sex trafficking, labor trafficking of minors is not currently a recognized form of child abuse or neglect in Maryland. This means that as a state we are not protecting and grossly underestimating the number of abused children in our communities. In addition, local Departments of Social Services are not providing services for this uniquely vulnerable population. SB550 would change this, defining labor trafficking as a form of child abuse and neglect, ensuring that the most vulnerable among us are connected to critical legal, mental health, and social services.

Since 2019, the SAFE Center has served 55 Regional Navigator clients and trained 926 community partners to recognize trafficking. For these clients, we have provided case management, therapy, education support, and mentorship, among many other services. During this same period, the SAFE Center has seen an increasing number of minor and young adult victims of labor trafficking in our two Regional Navigator jurisdictions. These survivors have profound medical, mental health, legal, educational, employment, and case management needs. Despite being young victims of human trafficking, this population is not eligible to be served under Regional Navigator. SB550 would change this by making victims of labor trafficking under age 25 eligible for Regional Navigator programs, offering services that could change the trajectory of their lives.

Currently, funding for housing, including rental assistance, is an unallowable cost under the Regional Navigator Program. At the SAFE Center, we have found that minor and young adult victims of labor trafficking often lack options for where to live and with whom during and after their trafficking. Many of these young victims live in poverty, which is both a root cause and outcome of human trafficking, making housing stability even more out of reach. In response to this need, SB550 would expand Regional

Navigator funding to allow for housing costs, which is often one of the most fundamental and foundational needs of victims.

For all the above reasons, the University of Maryland SAFE Center for Survivors of Human Trafficking supports SB550, with confidence that it would continue to move Maryland towards our goal of connecting every young victim of both sex *and* labor trafficking immediately to the services they need.

Sophie Aron
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SB0550 - FWA - DHS.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Sledge Government Affairs

Position: FWA

February 16, 2024

The Honorable Will Smith
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0550 - Children - Labor Trafficking - POSITION:
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide favorable testimony on Senate Bill 550 (SB0550). With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, we empower Marylanders to reach their full potential by providing preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to workforce development and career opportunities. The Social Services Administration (SSA) within DHS implements the Child Protective Services (CPS) program, which protects the same children as SB0550 through expanding the type of trafficking for which DHS can provide services to a child.

We strongly support SB0550 as it would aid the Department in protecting children from exploitation and abuse. Senate Bill 550 authorizes Child Protective Services to intervene in reported trafficking cases to assess safety and wellbeing of youth alleged to be victims of labor trafficking. Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) will have the opportunity to engage families, utilizing current family engagement practices, to evaluate the risk factors leading to the alleged labor trafficking and intervene in a prevention first service model to address risk factors or protect children from continued trafficking when required.

Senate Bill 550 intersects with our Social Services Administration Policy SSA/CW#23-02 where labor trafficking is defined according to Maryland criminal law as "knowingly taking, placing, harboring, persuading, inducing, or enticing another by force, fraud, or coercion to provide services or labor or receiving a benefit or thing of value from the provision of services or labor by another that was induced by force, fraud, or coercion" (Criminal Law §3-1202(a)). If passed, SB0550 provides statutory support for implementing SSA/CW#23-02, and the policy would be amended to align definitions.

We offer the following technical amendment for consideration by the Committee to align the definitions of possible maltreaters in sex and labor trafficking. As currently written, the bill does not permit individuals who are not related to the alleged victim or do not share an address with the victim child to be eligible to receive a finding of abuse or neglect in cases of labor trafficking. This contrasts with the definition of sex trafficking,



which includes 'sex trafficking of a child by any individual' (existing Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article § 3-801(z)(2)). This divergence is significant, as it allows for any individual responsible for sex trafficking of a minor to receive a finding of abuse or neglect through CPS, regardless of relation or address. Including “by any individual” in the definition of labor trafficking would align it with the definition of sex trafficking and ensure that all individuals responsible for these forms of child exploitation are held accountable. As a result, the bill should expressly include “labor trafficking” in the definitions of abuse or neglect that trigger required child protective services investigations, Family Law §5-701, and in the corresponding child-in-need-of-assistance statutes, Courts and Judicial Proceedings §3-801.¹

We appreciate the opportunity to provide favorable testimony to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. We look forward to the decision of the Committee and welcome continued collaboration on SB0550.

If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,



Rafael López
Secretary

¹ See Md. Code Ann., Family Law §5-701(b)(1)(ii) (defining “abuse” to include “sexual abuse”), (y)(2) (defining “sexual abuse” to include “sex trafficking of a child by any individual”); Md. Code Ann., Court and Judicial Proceedings. §3-801(b)(1), (z)(2) (same).



sb550.pdf

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Position: UNF

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Matthew J. Fader
Chief Justice

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: Senate Bill 550
Children – Labor Trafficking
DATE: January 31, 2024
(2/16)
POSITION: Oppose, as drafted

The Maryland Judiciary opposes Senate Bill 550, as drafted. This bill would amend the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article to add labor trafficking to the CINA definition and to add instances in which a parent or guardian engages in or facilitates labor trafficking to the list of circumstances in which the court may waive DSS’s obligation to make reasonable efforts toward reunification.

The Judiciary supports the intention of the bill but has several drafting concerns. First, the definition of labor trafficking is not the same as the one found in Criminal Law, Sections 3-1201 through 3-1203, and the Judiciary believes this discrepancy could lead to confusion.

Second, the Judiciary noted a concern that the definition could be used more broadly than intended, and perhaps lead to unintended consequences. Relatedly, “force, fraud, or coercion” can be a more difficult concept when applied in the context of parents and guardians.

cc. Hon. Charles Sydnor
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O’Connor