



BILL NO: House Bill 508
TITLE: Children - Labor Trafficking
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 15, 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 House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 508.**

House Bill 508 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. HB 508 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 HB 508.

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 HB 508.**

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