



BILL NUMBER: House Bill 620

TITLE: Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault
Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex
Trafficking

COMMITTEE: Ways and Means

HEARING DATE: February 14, 2024

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF) and its members respectfully request a favorable report with the inclusion of the undermentioned amendments for House Bill 620, as it has the possibility to make a significant impact on the ability to combat human trafficking across the state.

House Bill 620 requires age-appropriate educational programming on awareness and prevention of human trafficking to be included in existing sexual abuse and assault prevention curriculum for students in grades six through eight.

MDHTTF supports efforts to dismantle human trafficking by strengthening laws prosecuting traffickers, providing services and rehabilitation to victims, and increasing awareness of the issue. Education on the dangers and prevention of human trafficking – both sex and labor trafficking – is a critical tool, especially when taught to students through age-appropriate curriculum. MDHTTF would suggest that this curriculum be taught from the sixth grade through the twelfth grade, not simply ending at eighth.

Human trafficking is an ever-evolving enterprise, and those working on the front line of antihuman trafficking efforts have the awareness and years of earned knowledge on how to adapt to these realities. MDHTTF therefore has pause at the creation of curriculum on human trafficking without the input of such experts. To that end, MDHTTF suggests that if funding is not available or feasible for the appropriate individuals or organizations immersed in anti-trafficking efforts to either train those tasked with teaching the material or teach it themselves, that a working group, including at least one human trafficking provider, is created to develop the curriculum and ensure proper implantation. We further would suggest that this curriculum is reviewed at least every two years, due to the rapidly changing nature of human trafficking.

Lastly, we want to ensure that any curriculum educating about human trafficking includes information about both labor and sex trafficking and includes the commercial sexual exploitation of children and commercial sexual abuse of children.

MDHTTF thanks the Committee for its consideration of HB 620 and respectfully requests a favorable report with the inclusion of the aforementioned amendments.

For more information, please contact Amanda Rodriguez at arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org or Melanie Shapiro at mshapiro@mnadv.org, co-chairs of the Legislative Committee of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force.

About MDHTTF: Formed in 2007 by the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Attorney General of Maryland, and the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, MDHTTF serves as the lead investigative, prosecutorial, and victim services coordinating body for anti-human trafficking activity in the State of Maryland. MDHTTF has grown to include most law enforcement agencies in the State, all child-serving state agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Homeland Security Investigations, most local State's Attorney's Offices, and dozens of victim service agencies. MDHTTF is comprised of five committees – legislative, law enforcement, victim services, public awareness, and training. During this time, MDHTTF has grown a robust understanding of the issue of human trafficking in Maryland.