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TESTIMONY ON CROSSOVER BILL HB0763 – FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Wilkins and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of crossover bill HB0763, Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking

House bill HB0763 was passed by the House 137-3 on 03/11/25. There is no cross-filed Senate bill.

Maryland statistics show that child sexual abuse is a problem within Maryland.¹

In 2020, there were 1,365,166 children in Maryland.¹ Of those children, 7,242 were victims of child abuse or neglect. 28.4% of the child abuse or neglect that occurred in Maryland in 2020 was sexual abuse, meaning 2,059 Maryland children experienced sexual abuse. This is an increase of 3.4% from 2019.

The percentage of victims of child sexual abuse in Maryland is significantly higher than the national average of 9%.

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force has reported the following:²

- Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MHTTF) Victim Service Subcommittee members assisted **217** victims of trafficking in 2013
- FBI Child Exploitation Task Force has identified **46** child victims of trafficking in Maryland since January 2013
- MHTTF federal law enforcement partners have identified **200** total victims of trafficking since January 2013
- MHTTF federal law enforcement partners have arrested **94** human traffickers since January 2013
- **23** federal trafficking prosecutions in Maryland since January 2013

¹ https://mcasa.org/assets/files/Incidence_of_CSA_Fact_Sheet_2021.12.pdf

² <https://www.mdhumantrafficking.org/statistics>

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The intent of this bill is to equip our youth with the knowledge needed to, on an age appropriate basis, understand what the problem is and how to recognize it so they can avoid becoming victims to this plague on our society.

This bill establishes an educational framework that requires that a certain program on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault include, for students in grades 6 through 8, material promoting the awareness and prevention of human and sex trafficking.

We can and must proactively work to equip our children with tools, so they do not fall victim to these scourges. The consequences of inaction to arrest these problems are too terrible to contemplate.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on crossover bill HB0763.