
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL HB 1

Department of Transportation - Human Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response (See Someone, Save Someone Act) *Environment and Transportation Committee*

January 22, 2025

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 1, which requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to implement a training program for transportation sector employees to identify and report suspected human trafficking victims. This vital legislation is a powerful step toward addressing the pervasive crime of human trafficking, also referred to as modern-day slavery.ⁱ

Human trafficking is pervasive in Maryland and across the country. In 2023, the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) received 30,162 reports of suspected human trafficking, leading to 9,619 confirmed cases impacting 16,999 victims; in Maryland alone, 501 reports were made, resulting in 152 cases.ⁱⁱ These numbers only represent a fraction of the true scale of trafficking in our state, as many victims remain reluctant to come forward, unaware of available resources, or trapped by the secretive nature of trafficking operations.

Human trafficking preys upon society's most vulnerable, including children in the foster care system.ⁱⁱⁱ Human traffickers target children, and up to 70% of trafficked minors in the U.S. come from child social services or foster care.^{iv} Between 2014 and 2019, Maryland's local social services departments reported over 670 child sex trafficking cases – 93% of which involved female victims, 87% involved youth aged 14-17, and more than half were people of color.^v

Maryland's extensive transportation infrastructure – encompassing thousands of bus stops, 33 light rail stations, 14 metro stations, 10+ rest stops, 5 Amtrak stations, Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, and the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore – **makes it a key location for human trafficking activities.**^{vi} HB 1 leverages this reality to safeguard vulnerable individuals by engaging the transportation sector as a critical ally in the fight against trafficking.

HB 1 will help thwart human trafficking by training transportation sector employees to identify potential victims and connect them with vital resources, without exposing them to law enforcement – an essential consideration for undocumented individuals. By tapping into the Regional Navigator program, this bill offers a proactive solution for combatting human trafficking.

This bill builds on efforts in California and New York and complements federal law, such as the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), which mandates airline carriers to train employees on identifying and responding to human trafficking.

With HB 1, Maryland has an important opportunity to protect its most marginalized residents and take a decisive stand against human trafficking.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 1.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

ⁱ U.S. Department of State. (2019, June). Trafficking in Persons Report June 2019. United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf>

ⁱⁱ National Human Trafficking Hotline. (2023). National Statistics. Humantraffickinghotline.org. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics>

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of State. (2019, June). Trafficking in Persons Report June 2019. United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf>

^{iv} U.S. Institute Against Human Trafficking. (2022). U.S. Institute against Human Trafficking. <https://www.usiaht.org>

^v About Child Sex Trafficking. (n.d.). Araminta. Retrieved January 15, 2025, from <https://aramintausa.org/about-child-sex-trafficking/>

^{vi} Human Trafficking - Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. (n.d.). Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. Retrieved January 15, 2025, from <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/victim-services/human-trafficking/>