

BILL NO: Senate Bill 0007
TITLE: Human Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response
(See Someone, Save Someone Act)
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: January 22, 2025
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 0007 requires the Department of Transportation to develop and implement a training program for transportation sector employees on the identification and reporting of suspected human trafficking victims. This is a critical step forward in addressing the pervasive issue of human trafficking, which disproportionately impacts women and girls, particularly from marginalized communities.

By mandating the Maryland Department of Transportation to create a training program for transportation employees, SB0007 ensures that those with public-facing and high-traffic roles —such as drivers, station personnel, and security staff—are not only aware of the signs of trafficking but also understand their legal and ethical obligations to intervene and report. The requirement for training to be completed annually and within 90 days of hiring ensures that the workforce remains vigilant and educated on the latest methods of trafficking, which frequently evolve. Furthermore, SB0007 removes civil and criminal liability for reporting suspected trafficking, which provides critical legal protection for those who take action in good faith, ensuring that employees are not deterred by fear of repercussions.

Engagement at truck stops is a good example of how DoT employees can reduce the likelihood that vulnerable individuals, including runaway children, become easy targets for trafficking. These locations offer a degree of privacy, making it easier for traffickers to exploit their victims. While the majority of the trucking industry is not involved in sex trafficking, there are consumers who drive this illicit trade.

This bill addresses these alarming practices by mandating training for those working in the transportation sector to help them identify, report, and prevent human trafficking. SB0007 recognizes the structural power imbalances that allow trafficking to flourish and seeks to empower ordinary citizens—specifically those working in transportation—to be proactive agents in combating this common form of gender-based violence. By mandating training and establishing clear reporting mechanisms, the bill fosters a culture of accountability and care, where the safety and dignity of women and vulnerable individuals are prioritized.

In sum, SB0007 is not only a necessary measure to combat human trafficking but a critical tool to prevent exploitation, protect survivors, and create safer communities for all.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, legal services organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change, working to ensure physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy for women in Maryland.