



2601 N HOWARD ST
BALTIMORE, MD 21218
TEL 410) 625-LGBT (5428)
FAX 410) 625-7423
www.freestate-justice.org

Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Friday, February 21, 2025

HB0763 – Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Esteemed Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. I am here to testify in strong support of **HB0763**, which seeks to enhance the existing sexual abuse and assault awareness program by incorporating material on human and sex trafficking for students in grades 6 through 8.

HB0763 addresses a critical gap in our educational curriculum by introducing age-appropriate content on human and sex trafficking to middle school students. This initiative is particularly significant given the alarming prevalence of trafficking in Maryland. The state's strategic location along major interstate corridors and its diverse population make it a hotspot for trafficking activities. Data from the University of Maryland School of Social Work indicates that between June 2013 and September 2019, numerous child sex trafficking reports were made across various jurisdictions, with Baltimore City and Prince George's County reporting the highest numbers.

The inclusion of trafficking awareness in the curriculum is a proactive measure to equip students with the knowledge to recognize and avoid exploitative situations. Key provisions of **HB0763** include:

1. **Curriculum Integration:** Mandating that the State Board and nonpublic schools develop and implement programs that incorporate human and sex trafficking awareness into the health curriculum for grades 6 through 8. This ensures that all students receive consistent and comprehensive education on the subject.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Phillip Westry, Esq.
Executive Director

Lauren Pruitt, Esq.
Legal Director

Ronnie L. Taylor
Advocacy, Policy & Partnerships Director

BOARD

Lindsey Young
President

Andrew Adelman, Esq.
Vice President

Lee Carpenter, Esq.

Brenda Dorsch

Bonnie Smith

Adam Farra

Diana Philip

Tina Jones

Miller Douglas

Lauren Fleming, Esq.

Andrew Ansel

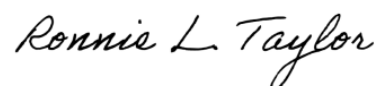
2. **Trained Educators:** Requiring that the instruction be delivered by teachers trained specifically in the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse, assault, and trafficking. Educators equipped with specialized training can provide accurate information and create a supportive environment for students.

The urgency of this legislation is underscored by the heightened vulnerability of certain student populations. LGBTQIA+ youth, for instance, face disproportionate risks. Studies have shown that up to 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQIA+, and they are 3 to 7 times more likely than their heterosexual peers to engage in survival sex, which involves trading sexual acts to meet basic needs. By educating all students about the tactics, traffickers use and the resources available for assistance, **HB0763** aims to reduce these vulnerabilities and foster a safer environment for all youth.

As an advocate for marginalized communities, I have witnessed firsthand the compounded effects of systemic discrimination on Black LGBTQIA+ individuals. The intersectionality of race, sexual orientation, and gender identity often exacerbates the challenges faced, leading to heightened vulnerabilities. **HB0763** represents a meaningful opportunity to address these compounded inequities and work toward a more just and inclusive Maryland.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB0763**. This legislation not only fills a crucial gap in our educational system but also reinforces Maryland's commitment to protecting its youth from exploitation and trafficking. By empowering students with knowledge, we take a significant step toward eradicating human and sex trafficking in our communities.

Best,



Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. [Human Trafficking Fact Sheet 10.2023.pdf](#)
2. [Turning around sex trafficking: One year after Safe Harbor in Maryland](#)
3. [LGBTQIA+ Youth and Experiences of Human Trafficking: A Healing-Centered Approach | Adolescent Medicine | LGBTQIA+ Health Education from The Fenway Institute | AMA Ed Hub](#)
4. [LGBTQ Homeless Youth Survivors of SexTrafficking](#)