

Written Testimony for **HB 763: Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking -**
Please **VOTE NO** on this bill.

Dear Ways & Means Committee:

This bill reads "...Requiring 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; and generally relating to human and sex trafficking awareness and prevention programs in **public and nonpublic schools**. ..."

I understand the intention of this bill. While I can appreciate the bill's many sponsors' intention to try to warn our children of the dangers of human and sex trafficking and sexual abuse and assault, I'm not in agreement that our public and nonpublic schools are the place to accomplish this objective.

Firstly, grades 6-8 are generally equivalent to ages 11-13. These are very impressionable ages. Are these children too young to be learning this information? There is a strong possibility that this information will cause extreme upset, anxiety, and depression and other mental health conditions in children of these ages. Are schools and the State willing to accept responsibility and **liability** for causing these extremely distressing emotions and mental conditions in our children?

Secondly, this is another program that will be **added** to our already overburdened schools. Where will we get the money to pay for this **additional** program? There is no mention in this bill about where the **funding** for this program will come from. Also, the bill indicates that this program must be "BE TAUGHT by a teacher who is **trained** to provide instruction on the awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault". Where is this training going to come from? Within the school system or an outside vendor that specializes in training? Who is going to **pay** for the training for this teacher?

Thirdly, there may be many parents that will be against this program being taught to their children, just like some parents are against their children being taught any sexual subjects at school. The constitution says that parents have the right to take charge of their children's education. The bill states that the program will "...BE INCORPORATED into the **health curriculum** of each county board and each nonpublic school..." Yet there is no mention of an "opt-out" option for parents!! If this is incorporated into the health curriculum, what part of the health curriculum? Will it be incorporated into the Family Life and Sexual Education portion of the health curriculum, where parents may

choose to “**opt-out**” their children? Some parents have very strong convictions that these topics should be covered in the home and that they, as parents, should be the “teachers” of this information to their children. And their convictions should be respected!!

Lastly, who is going to provide the curriculum, and the “material” for this information? Are schools going to create the curriculum and “materials” directly, or are the school systems going to have to pay for an outside vendor to create this curriculum and “materials”? If there is an outside vendor that creates this curriculum and “materials”, will the parents be given the right and the opportunity to review this outside curriculum and “materials” and give their feedback? How is the State going to make sure that the information is age-appropriate (as is one of the stipulations of this bill)?

There are too many questions about this bill that have not been answered. And these are extremely important questions that need to be addressed!!

Therefore, please **VOTE NO** on this bill. Our children are precious and may not have the emotional ability to handle this information.

Thank you for your courtesy, attention and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals
A Very Concerned Mother of 3 and Maryland Resident