

HB 355/SB 254: Education - Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program - Human and Sex Trafficking: Please vote **TO SUPPORT** this bill with Amendments

Dear Ways & Means and Education, Energy & the Environment Committees:

I am writing to express my **support for HB 355/SB 254**, which establishes a **Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program addressing human and sex trafficking** in Maryland schools, **with an important amendment** to ensure the program is **age-appropriate and not overly graphic**.

Educating students about personal safety, exploitation, grooming behaviors, and how to seek help is both **necessary and responsible**. Human and sex trafficking are real threats, and schools play an important role in prevention by equipping students with knowledge, awareness, and trusted reporting pathways.

At the same time, it is essential that this instruction be delivered in a manner that **respects students' developmental stages and family values**. I strongly support an amendment that clearly requires the curriculum to be **non-graphic, trauma-informed, and age-appropriate**, with a focus on **recognition, prevention, and seeking help**, rather than explicit descriptions that could be distressing or inappropriate for younger students.

Clear statutory guidance on content standards will help ensure that the program **protects students without causing unnecessary fear, anxiety, or exposure to explicit material**. Such guardrails also support educators by providing clarity and consistency in how this sensitive subject matter is taught.

With these protections in place, **HB 355/SB 254 strikes an appropriate balance:** raising awareness of serious risks while safeguarding students' well-being and maintaining parental trust in school-based instruction.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **support HB 355/SB 254 with an amendment requiring non-graphic, age-appropriate instruction**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,
Trudy Tibbals

