



BILL NUMBER: SB 473

TITLE: Public Utilities - For-Hire Drivers and Transportation Network Operators - Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Training and Liability

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

HEARING DATE: 4/2/2026

POSITION: FAV

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF) is Maryland's coordinated, multi-disciplinary response to human trafficking, bringing together federal, state, and local law enforcement, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to identify and support survivors and hold traffickers accountable. The Legislative Subcommittee includes members from law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, service providers, government entities, and faith-based partners, and works to improve Maryland's human trafficking laws, partner with legislators, and testify on key legislation each session. On behalf of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 473.

SB 473 requires applicants for specified for-hire driver and transportation network operator licenses, including taxicab drivers licensed by local jurisdictions and drivers regulated by the Public Service Commission, to provide documentation that they have completed human trafficking awareness and prevention training as part of the licensing and renewal process. The bill specifies that training may include the U.S. Department of Transportation's Leaders Against Human Trafficking/Combating Human Trafficking in the Transportation Sector curriculum or another nationally recognized human trafficking awareness program, and it must cover how to recognize potential trafficking victims, how to respond appropriately, and how to connect individuals with available resources. By embedding these requirements in the licensing framework, SB 473 ensures that thousands of drivers who regularly interact with members of the public are equipped with practical tools to identify and safely respond to possible trafficking situations.

The Task Force supports targeted training in the transportation sector because traffickers routinely use cars, taxicabs, and transportation network services to move victims between residences, hotels, short-term rentals, and commercial locations. For-hire drivers and transportation network operators are often among the few non-exploitative adults who see victims in transit, sometimes

repeatedly, and may notice red flags such as controlling companions, lack of personal possessions, or signs of fear or coercion. Providing standardized training on indicators of sex and labor trafficking, trauma-informed ways to interact with potential victims, and safe reporting pathways can turn these everyday interactions into critical opportunities for intervention and support.

SB 473 also provides that licensed taxicab drivers, for-hire drivers, and transportation network operators may not be held civilly or criminally liable for reporting or responding in good faith to a suspected incident of human trafficking. This good-faith immunity is an essential complement to the training requirement, as many drivers are reluctant to come forward for fear of misinterpreting a situation, facing retaliation, or becoming entangled in legal proceedings. By clearly protecting drivers who act in good faith, the bill reduces barriers to reporting, encourages earlier engagement with law enforcement and service providers, and supports a culture in which safety concerns related to trafficking are taken seriously and shared promptly.

Importantly, SB 473 integrates human trafficking awareness into existing regulatory structures that already require criminal background checks and driving record reviews for for-hire drivers and transportation network operators. This approach minimizes administrative burden while leveraging established licensing processes to deliver consistent, statewide training standards across counties, municipalities, and transportation network companies. The Task Force views such systemic, sector-wide education as a core element of Maryland's comprehensive strategy to prevent and reduce human trafficking, alongside strong criminal statutes, victim services, and enforcement efforts.

For these reasons, the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urges the Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a Favorable report on Senate Bill 473.

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