



BILL NUMBER: HB 1348

TITLE: Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions - Authorization

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

HEARING DATE: 3/31/2026

POSITION: FAV

TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County and a comprehensive domestic violence service provider, offering crisis response, survivor-centered advocacy, legal referrals, trauma-informed therapy, and community education. TurnAround also serves as the Regional Navigator for Baltimore County and Howard County, providing specialized services to survivors of human trafficking, and is a member of the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV), and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF).

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee brings together federal, state, and local law enforcement, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to identify and support survivors and hold traffickers accountable. Its Legislative Subcommittee—comprised of representatives from law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, service providers, government entities, and faith-based partners—works to strengthen Maryland’s human trafficking laws, collaborate with legislators, and provide testimony on key legislation each session. On behalf of TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1348.

HB 1348 creates a clear pathway for mandated reporters—health practitioners, police officers, educators, and human service workers—to notify Regional Navigators when they suspect child sex trafficking or labor trafficking, in addition to their existing mandatory reporting obligations to local departments of social services or law enforcement. The bill authorizes these professionals to contact a Regional Navigator when, in their professional judgment, such notification is necessary to prevent serious harm to the child or other children, and permits this contact even without the child’s consent or over the child’s express objection. HB 1348 also authorizes State’s Attorneys and the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute violations of Maryland’s human trafficking laws, as well as any crime based on the act establishing the trafficking violation, ensuring that cases can be pursued effectively at both the local and statewide levels.

From our work across Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County, we know that hospitals, schools, and community-based providers are often the first to see indicators that a child may be at risk of, or actively experiencing, sex or labor trafficking. At the same time, Child Protective Services (CPS) and local departments of social services are already overburdened, and fear or confusion about the consequences of CPS involvement can deter some professionals from reporting or can lead to missed opportunities for intervention, particularly in immigrant and mixed-status families. In some jurisdictions, including Western Maryland and parts of Prince George's County, there are noticeable gaps between the number of children accessing services and the number of referrals received by Regional Navigators, suggesting that trafficking concerns are not consistently reaching specialized providers.

HB 1348 addresses these gaps by explicitly allowing mandated reporters to contact Regional Navigators as a complementary pathway to the existing CPS and law enforcement reporting framework. This approach helps ensure that children at risk of trafficking are connected more quickly to specialized, trauma-informed support without requiring families to navigate complex systems alone. It also leverages the existing Regional Navigator network, which is specifically designed to coordinate services, safety planning, housing, medical care, and legal assistance for child trafficking survivors across jurisdictions.

The bill's "serious harm to the child or other children" standard recognizes that trafficking-related risks often escalate quickly and may not fit neatly within traditional abuse and neglect categories. Allowing professionals to exercise their clinical and professional judgment to notify Regional Navigators in high-risk situations helps ensure that potential trafficking is addressed early, before violence, exploitation, or control become even more entrenched. In practice, this can mean, for example, that a school counselor who observes concerning online relationships, unexplained absences, and signs of control or isolation can reach out to a Regional Navigator for consultation and a coordinated response, even when they are unsure how CPS or law enforcement will classify the situation.

Regional Navigators operate using a survivor-centered, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed model that prioritizes safety planning, voluntary engagement, and trust-building. By explicitly recognizing Regional Navigators in the Family Law reporting framework, HB 1348 helps normalize collaboration between mandated reporters and specialized trafficking service providers, ensuring that children receive support that is tailored to the unique dynamics of both sex and labor trafficking.

HB 1348 also clarifies that both State's Attorneys and the Attorney General may investigate and prosecute violations of Maryland's human trafficking statutes, as well as related crimes arising from the same underlying conduct. This clarification strengthens Maryland's capacity to pursue complex trafficking networks that may cross county lines or involve multiple forms of exploitation,

while maintaining the important role of local prosecutors. A coordinated enforcement structure, coupled with improved reporting and service linkage through Regional Navigators, better aligns Maryland's legal framework with the realities of how traffickers operate and how survivors access help.

For these reasons, TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 1348.

For further information, please contact Amanda Rodriguez, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, TurnAround, Inc., and Chair, MDHTTF Legislative Subcommittee.