



HB0827 Juvenile Law – Sex Trafficking - Immunity, Services, and Investigations  
(Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019)  
Presented to the Hon. Luke Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2019 1:00 p.m.

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**POSITION: SUPPORT**

**NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Judiciary Committee a favorable report on HB0827 – Juvenile Law – Sex Trafficking - Immunity, Services, and Investigations (Child Sex Trafficking Screening and Services Act of 2019), sponsored by Delegate Brooke Lierman.** Protection from sexual abuse is a critical reproductive justice issue. All Marylanders deserve to access the right to safety from sexual violence.

In 2015, Maryland laid the groundwork for how the state should respond to minors subjected to sex trafficking through the Safe Harbor Working Group, comprised of crime victim service providers, state agencies, community advocates, law enforcement, and survivors from around the state. Based on their important recommendations, legislation has been introduced each year to ensure that no child falls through the cracks by way of establishing coordinated services for those confirmed as trafficked youth.

One of the recommendations was creating local single-point-of-entry services for youth victims of human trafficking. Among its provisions, HB0827 requires a law enforcement officer who has reason to believe that a certain child is a victim of sex trafficking to notify a regional direct service agency to provide the immediate, expert care that the youth deserves. Each community-based victim services agency shall be comprised of trained professionals that know that a minor who is reasonably believed to have engaged in prostitution should be considered a crime victim of sexual abuse and that the youth shall have access to immediate child-centered and trauma-informed services. These crime victim-centered services should include appropriate health assessment and medical care that is also patient-centered - and this is important to youth seeking sensitive and timely sexual and reproductive healthcare as a result of the sexual victimization.

Survivors of sexual violence have rights that must be protected, and the elected officials of Maryland have a duty to uphold those protections. It is critical that our state legislature continues to show their commitment to survivors. **For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB0827.** Thank you for your time and consideration.