



SB0690 – Criminal Law – Human Trafficking and Prostitution Offenses

Presented to the Hon. Bobby Zirkin and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

February 22, 2019 12:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee a favorable report on SB0690**, Criminal Law – Human Trafficking and Prostitution Offenses, sponsored by Senator Susan Lee.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. This legislation takes a crucial step towards intervening to save more victims of human trafficking and sex trafficking. Victims of sex trafficking deserve the full extent of legal protection in order establish and maintain safety from further sexual abuse and exploitation.

Sex trafficking is pervasive in the US. 72 cases of human trafficking were reported in Maryland in 2018¹. According to the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, an estimate of 200,000 people are trafficked within the United States each year².

SB0690 expands the definition of human trafficking to protect public safety. For instance, this bill mandates that not knowing the age of a victim not be used as a defense in court. This is critical, as traffickers can claim this, but, regardless of the real or perceived age of a child, there is an intent to harm a young person in sex trafficking.

Further, this bill clarifies that activities relating to sex trafficking beyond the act of trafficking itself are illegal. For example, a person cannot knowingly allow a building they own to be used for trafficking, create a structure to facilitating trafficking, or allow individuals into their building in order for trafficking to occur. These mandates ensure that sex trafficking is a community problem with community solutions. It is the responsibility of every Marylander to avoid activities that could facilitate the harm of sex trafficking victims.

We strongly support this effort to continue to protect victims of sex trafficking and criminalize all acts surrounding trafficking. For these reasons, **NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges a favorable report on SB0690**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ DiGregorio, Z. (2017). Criminal Records and Unemployment: The Impact on the Economy. [online] Wharton Public Policy Initiative. Available at: <https://publicpolicy.wharton.upenn.edu/live/news/2071-criminal-records-and-unemployment-the-impact-on> [Accessed 18 Feb. 2019].

² Statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.mdhumantrafficking.org/statistics>