



BILL NO: House Bill 1152
TITLE: Interstate Human Trafficking of Minors Prohibition Act
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: March 7, 2019
POSITION: OPPOSE

Summary. -- The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MHTTF) supports HB1152. The MHTTF urges an unfavorable report for this legislation as it could have a significant negative impact on survivors of human trafficking across the state.

Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force. -- Formed in 2007 by the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Attorney General of Maryland, and the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, MHTTF serves as the lead investigative, prosecutorial, and victim services coordinating body for anti-human trafficking activity in the State of Maryland. The MHTTF has grown to include most law enforcement agencies in the State, all child serving state agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Homeland Security Investigations, most local State's Attorney's Offices and dozens of victim service agencies. The Task Force is comprised of 5 committees – legislative, law enforcement, victim services, public awareness and training. During this time, the Task Force has grown a robust understanding of the issue of human trafficking in Maryland.

Testimony. -- The MHTTF opposes House Bill 1152 as this is not a human trafficking bill and connecting human trafficking to abortion regulation conflates and politicizes the issue.

HB 1152 would require mandated reporters who encounter a pregnant minor to notify the State's Attorney or face a criminal misdemeanor penalty. The experience of our victim service providers dictates that this would have a chilling effect on clients' ability and desire to share information about pregnancy. This would greatly impact providers' ability to provide services and address the medical needs of human trafficking survivors.

Finally, HB 1152 would establish an additional avenue for felony prosecution of human trafficking in Maryland if an adult "bring[s] a minor into the State to commit a violation of [the human trafficking law.]" While this provision may sound harmless and even helpful on its face, it potentially may have a significant impact on survivors. As this committee has heard on numerous bills related to trafficking, survivors are often criminalized for things they are forced to do. Unfortunately, this includes being charged with acts as this bill outlines. It's inclusion without more data to support the need for such a provision could potentially be harmful. More information is needed before including this language.

Overall, HB 1152 is not in the best interest of either minor *or* adult victims of human trafficking, and, in fact, would cause them both additional harm. For this and the other reasons stated above, the MHTTF opposes HB 1152 and respectfully urges an unfavorable report.