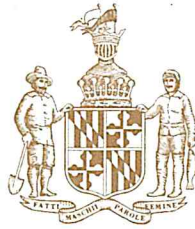


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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 28, 2020

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 242  
Motion to Vacate Judgment – Human Trafficking (True Freedom Act 2020)

Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

Across the nation, and in Maryland, there is a growing awareness that victims of human trafficking are often arrested and prosecuted for crimes they are forced to commit by their traffickers. A criminal conviction, places a number of consequences on trafficking survivors, such as limitations on their ability to secure safe, stable housing, gainful employment, or government benefits. The impact of having been trafficked on the psychological and physical well-being of victims, combined with the latter limitations on access to basic needs, leaves criminalized victims vulnerable to re-exploitation. In addition, the criminalization of trafficked survivors all but ensures that they are left without the stability needed to heal from trauma and to rebuild their lives.

Maryland responded to this injustice in 2011, becoming the second state in the country to enact a “vacating convictions” law, which allows survivors of sex trafficking to vacate, or, *set aside*, their *prostitution* convictions. Since that time, all but six states have passed some form of criminal record relief specific to survivors of trafficking.

However, in the years since its enactment, Maryland’s vacatur law has proved woefully inadequate in meeting the needs of Maryland’s survivors. Currently, over 40 states have enacted “vacating convictions” laws providing greater legal relief to criminalized survivors than Maryland’s vacatur law.

House Bill 242 addresses this issue by:

1. Increasing the number of convictions eligible for vacatur for crimes related to the victims trafficking;
2. Allowing survivors of labor trafficking to access the relief; and,
3. Eliminating the need for survivors of trafficking to seek the consent of the State’s Attorney’s office before being able to file for relief.

Survivors of trafficking in the State of Maryland deserve far better, thank you for your support in 2019 legislative session; and, I ask for a favorable report on HB 242.