



BILL NUMBER: SB153

TITLE: Maryland Department of Transportation - Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response

COMMITTEE: JPR

HEARING DATE: January 31, 2024

POSITION: Information

TurnAround, Inc. respectfully provides the following information for consideration on this bill.

Transportation is a key resource used by survivors of trafficking to ensure safe passage from abusive situations. Survivors rely on different modes of transportation from buses, trains, subways, airports and legitimate and illegitimate taxi services and ride share programs. To a trafficking survivor, accessible transportation is safety.

This bill, as intended, provides for training, signage and protocol development for transportation employees in hopes of identifying and providing support for trafficked individuals. The nuanced nature of trafficking requires increased protections, and access to local resources. The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force works collaboratively and across disciplines to provide a comprehensive response to the issue of trafficking in our state. The Task Force can provide training and expertise across the state and should be involved in the development and implementation of training for transportation employees.

Additionally, in protocol development, identification of survivors should be done only be done by qualified professionals that can quickly and safely provide support to survivors. Requesting support from law enforcement upon the potential identification of a trafficking survivor can lead to further harm including death of the survivor. Law enforcement is a key player in addressing human trafficking; however, their involvement must be engaged at the express request of the survivor.

This bill also requests that the National Human Trafficking Hotline be given as an additional resource; however, local providers across the state have found that this does not lead to additional support locally. Most jurisdictions have local resources that should be depended on, like local trafficking task forces, regional navigators and other victim service providers. Local resources are more apt at responding immediately and ensure the survivor is taken to safety.

About TurnAround, Inc TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County, and a comprehensive domestic violence center. Crisis response, victim-centered advocacy, legal referrals, trauma therapy, and community education are core components of the agency's work. TurnAround is the designated Regional Navigator for Howard County providing services to Human Trafficking survivors. TurnAround is a member of the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) and Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MHTTF).

For more information, please contact:
Amanda Rodriguez, Esq.
arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org
(410) 377-8111 (o)