

Bill

Senate Joint Resolution 7: Concerning Human Trafficking

Sponsors

Senator Simonaire

The Issue

- The victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children and sex trafficking are often arrested and charged with the crime of prostitution and related offenses they committed as a direct result of their being trafficked.
- Law enforcement and other first responders are handicapped by the lack of options for placement and referral of these victims.
- It is inconsistent with their status as victims to detain a juvenile victim of sex trafficking in juvenile detention facilities.
- Child victims of sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation require a child protection response, including specialized shelter and services.
- The State of Maryland needs a comprehensive approach to establishing protective responses for victims of juvenile sex trafficking that includes non-criminalization, restoration and reintegration.

Legislative Solution

Establish protective responses that end the arrest and detention of sex trafficking victims and ensure instead that they are provided crime victim protections, services, and benefits. Clear statutory mechanisms for ensuring prompt identification of victims followed by appropriate placement and provision of specialized services for sexually exploited youth are needed to prevent a punitive response through the criminal justice system that fails to connect them with needed services or an inadequate child protection response that may allow victims to return to their trafficker or to the conditions which led to their trafficking. A specialized protective response establishes a process that identifies child sex trafficking victims and directs them into multidisciplinary services and residential placement options that are designed to work in conjunction to break the trauma bond and concomitant cycle of victims returning to their traffickers. Specialized services for child sex trafficking victims should include protective shelters, physical and mental health care, education, and recovery programs. Services should be delivered by trained trauma responders and health care providers.

How This Resolution Addresses the Issue

- Senate Joint Resolution 7 calls on the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force to perform a study of the various approaches to protective response systems that other states have implemented and require a report of recommendations to the Governor and the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee and the House Judiciary Committee by December 31, 2014.

