



**“Stop Criminalizing Kids for Crimes Committed Against Them!”**

**Despite Sex Trafficking Laws, Children in Arizona Can be Charged with Prostitution**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, Arizona has taken steps to address child sex trafficking within the state through consistent legislative action. Such work has allowed Arizona to achieve a “B” grade for the laws the state passed to combat domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST), according to an [annual State Report Card](#) released by [Shared Hope International](#) (SHI), the only U.S. NGO working in every state to end child sex trafficking through legal reform. Despite Arizona’s legislative efforts, their law still allows child victims of sex trafficking to be charged and prosecuted for prostitution offenses.

“Kids can still be charged and prosecuted as criminals in 31 states because law has not kept up with reality – the reality that these children are victims of sex trafficking and cannot be criminals at the same time for the same thing,” said SHI founder Linda Smith, at a press conference in Orlando, FL where the National Foundation for Women Legislators is meeting.

“We must stop criminalizing kids for crimes committed against them!” declared Smith.

SHI started the annual report card—known as the Protected Innocence Challenge—six years ago, in 2011. That year, 26 states got Fs and 15 had Ds. Over the last six years, **Arizona**, along with states across the nation, **enacted important laws**:

- From 2011 to 2016 Arizona’s Protected Innocence Challenge grade has gone up from a C to a B.
- Arizona law provides substantial penalties for sex trafficking and gives law enforcement critical investigative tools to pursue demand.

Despite so much progress, SHI research **found critical gaps** in these areas in the laws of **Arizona**:

- Arizona is one of 31 states where children still can be charged and prosecuted for prostitution, in conflict with their status as victims of sex trafficking.
- Minor victims of sex trafficking may face barriers to victims’ compensation to fund their recovery.
- Arizona law does not create avenues to specialized services for child victims of sex trafficking.

[Shared Hope International](#) is an anti-trafficking organization focusing on prevention, restoration and justice for victims of sex trafficking. Founded in 1998 by Congresswoman Linda Smith, Shared Hope is a trusted leader for training, research, restorative development, and legislative development.

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**MEDIA MATERIALS:**

For media convenience, a variety of resources are available at [www.sharedhope.org/press](http://www.sharedhope.org/press). Video clips, including sex trafficking survivor comments, are available at this location: <https://vimeo.com/user12564384/videos>. Videos are password protected, please enter password sharedmedia1 to access media clips.