



## **CONNECTICUT WORKS TO CLOSE LEGAL GAPS TO FIGHT CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, Every state now has a law against sex trafficking and most state laws include penalties for buying sex with a minor, 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. Among several of Connecticut's legislative advancements this year, the State took imperative steps to pass laws that recognize the need to expand protections for all children under 18.

"We are excited to see states, like Connecticut, leading the nation in recognizing all commercially sexually exploited children as victims of sex trafficking, and protecting them from being charged or prosecuted for the crimes committed against them," said SHI founder Linda 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, **Connecticut**, along with states across the nation, **enacted important laws:**

- From 2011 to 2016 Connecticut's Protected Innocence Challenge grade has gone up from an F to a B.
- The enactment of HB 5621 on June 6, 2016 acknowledges that all children under 18 engaged in commercial sex are victims of sex trafficking and may not be prosecuted for prostitution offenses.
- HB 5621 prevents buyers from raising a mistake-of-age defense in prosecutions for purchasing sex with a child.
- Connecticut's human trafficking law does not require the use of force, fraud, or coercion when committed against a minor.

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

- Buyer laws have weak penalties that are unlikely to seriously deter demand for sex with minors.
- Lacking critical and comprehensive tools for law enforcement, Utah faces challenges in investigating and prosecuting child 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.sharedhoopre.org/press](http://www.sharedhoopre.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.