

PRESS RELEASE

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DC'S STRONG LAWS FIGHT CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING BUT GAPS REMAIN

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.

"We are excited to see DC 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 past 6 years, the **District of Columbia (D.C.)**, along with states across the nation, **enacted important laws:**

- From 2011 to 2016 DC's Protected Innocence Challenge grade has gone up from an F to C.
- Child sex trafficking is a crime without regard to force, fraud, or coercion.
- D.C. is a leader in the nation, as 1 of only 19 states where children can no longer be charged with prostitution and criminalized for the crime being committed against them.
- D.C. law also creates avenues to specialized services for victims of domestic minor sex trafficking.
- In D.C. buyers can be charged under the trafficking law, reflecting their role in the crime of sex trafficking and imposing serious penalties to deter demand.

However there is room to improve. SHI research found **gaps** in these areas of **D.C.** law:

- In D.C., laws do not address the need to combat the growing use of the Internet to commit sex trafficking.
- In order for child welfare to respond to a child sex trafficking victim the trafficking has to be done by a caregiver, this CAN result in some victims not receiving services through child welfare.

[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. 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.