



**FLORIDA 1<sup>ST</sup> STATE IN NATION TO SCORE 100% ON PROTECTING  
VICTIMS OF CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, Florida is the first state in the nation to score 100% on its laws to protect and provide services to victims of domestic minor sex trafficking, 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. Florida is also the only state in 2016 to raise their grade to an A grade, joining just 6 other states that have achieved an A grade: Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, Tennessee, Texas and Washington.

"Florida is a leader in building a legal framework that recognizes child victims of sex trafficking and makes sure that state law provides access to the specialized services they need," said SHI founder Linda Smith. "Shared Hope celebrates the concerted effort by organizations and government departments across the state, and over many years that has brought them to this A grade. They didn't give up! All states in the nation should follow their example."

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

- From 2011 to 2016 Florida's Protected Innocence Challenge grade has gone up from a C to A.
- Florida passed HB 545/SB 1294 on April 6, 2016 and eliminated criminal liability for minors under the prostitution law, aligning with their status as child sex trafficking victims.
- On April 15, 2016 Florida passed SB 12 creating additional avenues to specialized services for commercially sexually exploited children.

Despite Florida's notable progress, SHI's research shows that key gaps remain in the following areas:

- Buyers charged under the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) law may raise mistake of age as a defense.
- Demand penalties under the CSEC law only apply when the victim is under 16 years of age, leaving older minors without the protection of this law.

[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.