



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

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

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, Idaho’s human trafficking law criminalizes the buying of sex with a child, regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion was used and regardless of whether a trafficker is involved. 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.

“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, **Idaho**, along with states across the nation, **enacted important laws**:

- From 2011 to 2016 Idaho’s Protected Innocence Challenge grade has gone up from an F to a C.
- Idaho’s human trafficking law includes sex trafficking of minors and brings buyers’ conduct under the trafficking law.

Despite so much progress, SHI research **found critical gaps** in these areas in **Idaho** state law:

- Child victims of sex trafficking may be prosecuted for prostitution offenses.
- Child victims of sex trafficking face barriers under the law in accessing the protection and services of child welfare.
- Buyers of sex with children are not prohibited from raising a defense that the child willingly engaged in the sex act or that the buyer did not know that the minor was under 18.

[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.