



Continued Efforts to Address Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Have Created Critical Protections for Children in Montana

WASHINGTON, D.C., After passing key legislation in 2015, Montana achieved an “A” grade for its laws responding to 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. Montana adopted the federal Uniform Act in 2015 and in doing so, it carefully crafted the sex trafficking law to apply to buyers and remove third party control. This legislation also changed Montana’s laws so that child victims of sex trafficking can no longer be charged and prosecuted for prostitution and other offenses related to their victimization.

“We are excited to see states, like Montana, take the critical step of 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. This year, **Montana**, along with states across the nation, **enacted important laws:**

- Montana’s child sex trafficking laws do not require force, fraud, or coercion and reaches buyers, sellers and facilitators of sex trafficking of a minor, imposing steep penalties for those convicted.
- Juvenile sex trafficking victims are protected from prosecution for prostitution offenses.
- Child victims may access state services and benefits, including crime victim compensation.

Despite so much progress, SHI research **found a critical gap** in in the laws of **Montana** that address victim protections:

- Access to specialized services for victims is not mandated by 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.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Susanna Bean
Communications Manager
703.351.8062 office / 717.608.1039 cell
Susanna@sharedhope.org

MEDIA MATERIALS:

For media convenience, a variety of resources are available at www.sharedhoope.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.