



“Stop Criminalizing Kids for Crimes Committed Against Them!”

Even with State Sex Trafficking Laws in Place, Children in Oregon Can be Charged with Prostitution

WASHINGTON, D.C., Oregon’s continued efforts to pass key child sex trafficking laws over the last six years has allowed the state to achieve a “B” grade, 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. However, despite local efforts to provide a protective response to children engaged in commercial sex, particularly in Portland and Multnomah County, Oregon state law still prosecutes child victims of sex trafficking for crimes committed against them.

“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 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 Linda Smith, found of SHI.

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

- From 2011 to 2016 Oregon’s Protected Innocence Challenge grade has gone up from a D to a B.
- Oregon’s trafficking in persons law applies to buyers of sex with minors in some situations.
- Minor victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) or trafficking may be identified as abused and receive the protection and services of child welfare.

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

- Prosecution requires that the means of force, fraud or coercion were employed when the victim is 15 years of age or older.
- Child victims of domestic minor sex trafficking may be subject to prosecution for prostitution and could face detention.
- Oregon’s human trafficking law applies to buyers of sex with children, but only when the buyer knows or is in reckless regard of the fact that the minor is under 15 or that force, fraud, or coercion were used to cause the minor to engage in commercial sex.

[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.