



**NEW REPORT REFLECTS CALIFORNIA'S STEADY LEGISLATIVE COMMITMENT
TO COMBATING CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING**

WASHINGTON, D.C., A report released today by Shared Hope International demonstrates a 7-year trend in improved state laws that combat child sex trafficking. With the enactment of SB 1322 this year, California exemplifies this trend with the commitment to protect all minor victims of sex trafficking. Due to this active legislative session, California raised their grade from D to C, becoming this year's second most improved state.

SB 1322 follows in the steps of legislation passed by 19 other states in the U.S. and recognizes that children who have been bought and sold for sex are victims of child sex trafficking. As victims of this crime, they cannot also be charged with or held liable for the crime of prostitution.

"This new law was a critical step forward, and puts California at the forefront of the nation in protecting child sex trafficking victims," said Linda Smith, Founder and President of Shared Hope International.

Local advocate and volunteer Ambassador of Hope for Shared Hope, Kristina Kavanau, said, "We were overjoyed after California Senate Bill 1322 passed on the Assembly floor, after many years of advocacy by innumerable California stakeholders including countless sex trafficking survivors."

As the only U.S. NGO working in every state to end the scourge of child sex trafficking through legal reform, Shared Hope launched the Protected Innocence Challenge in 2011. The *Challenge* provides annual Report Cards, grading all 50 states and D.C., by applying a framework composed of 41 areas of law that set the minimum standards for combating child sex trafficking. During the first year, 26 states, including California, received a failing grade. The 2017 Protected Innocence Challenge illustrates significant progress in our overall score as a nation – the national average has risen 23 points on the grade scale in seven years, from 59% to 82%. Notably, California is the second most improved state with a score increase of 11.5%.

Kate Walker Brown, Director on Child Trafficking of the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL), shared about their coalition success this year, "We at NCYL, along with our partners and survivor leaders, embarked on a multi-year campaign to fundamentally change the way trafficking victims are treated in California. First, we clarified the law to recognize that children who are commercially sexually exploited are victims of child abuse. Second, we successfully advocated for increased funding, which allowed service providers to more effectively identify and serve these children. And only after that infrastructure was in place, did we and our partners pursue decriminalization legislation. Last year, we assembled a coalition of advocates and survivors, and successfully passed SB 1322. Today, children who are forced to sell sex-- either by an exploiter or to meet their basic needs--will no longer be criminalized for their victimization."

"I am proud of the work we've accomplished over the past few years as a State to get us where we are today," remarked Michelle Guymon, Director of the Child Trafficking Unite at the Los Angeles County Probation Department. "Shifting our thinking around commercially sexually exploited children/youth as victims of child abuse rather than criminalizing them as delinquents has been an enormous first step."

Shared Hope's grades will be released in a livestream briefing on November 15 at 11am. [Watch here](#). It will be followed at 12pm by a virtual panel discussion with survivors of sex trafficking. [Register for the panel here](#).

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[Shared Hope International](#) is an international anti-trafficking organization focusing on prevention, restoration and justice for victims of sex trafficking. [Linda Smith](#), served as a state legislator and Member of Congress from Washington State (1983-1998), and is the author of *Renting Lacy* (2009). She founded Shared Hope in 1998.

MEDIA MATERIALS:

For media convenience, a variety of resources are available at www.sharedhope.org/press.