



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

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

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, Colorado has made notable legislative steps to address child sex trafficking within the state. Colorado’s legislative responses to domestic minor sex trafficking earned the state 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. Despite such progress, Colorado law still allows for the prosecution of children who engage in commercial sex, providing a punitive, rather than protective, response.

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

- From 2011 to 2016 Colorado’s Protected Innocence Challenge grade has gone up from an F to a B.
- The human trafficking of a minor for sexual servitude law makes domestic minor sex trafficking illegal without requiring proof of force, fraud, or coercion or an identified trafficker.
- Colorado’s child sex trafficking law can apply to buyers who purchase sex with children.
- HB 1224, enacted in 2016, added child sex trafficking to the definition of child abuse and directs child welfare to respond and provide services to child sex trafficking victims, regardless if the abuse is caused by a non-familial trafficker or a buyer.

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

- Colorado is one of 31 states where children still can be charged and prosecuted for prostitution, in conflict with their status as victims of sex trafficking.
- Colorado’s human trafficking law does not apply to persons who aid in or facilitate child sex trafficking.

[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.