



UTAH STRENGTHENS LAWS TO FIGHT CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

WASHINGTON, D.C., 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.

“We are excited to see Utah leading the nation in recognizing all commercially sexually exploited children as victims of sex trafficking, and protecting them from being 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. Over the last six years, **Utah**, along with states across the nation, **enacted important laws:**

- Utah passed SB 82, a law to reach buyers’ conduct by adding ‘patronizes’ and ‘solicits’ to its definition of trafficking, aligning to a recent clarified federal law, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (JVTA).
- The passage of SB 158 and HB 206 this year defines child sex trafficking as a form of child abuse, allowing child welfare to intervene and provide services.
- From 2011 to 2016 Utah’s Protected Innocence Challenge grade has gone up from an F to a B.
- Utah is a leader in the nation, as one of only 19 states and DC, where children can no longer be prosecuted for prostitution and criminalized for the crime being committed against them.
- Utah criminalizes human trafficking of a child for sexual exploitation without regard to force, fraud, or coercion.
- The state has laws to prosecute demand for commercial sex acts with a minor.
- A protective response, instead of prosecution, is required by law for commercially sexually exploited children, creating pathways to services and justice.

Despite so much progress, SHI found key gaps in Utah’s laws. Without comprehensive training for law enforcement and critical tools for prosecutors, Utah may face challenges in investigating and prosecuting 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. 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.