



**NEW REPORT SHOWS MAINE'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
IN 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. During the 2017 legislative session, Maine, under the leadership of Senator Diamond and Senator Volk, took important steps forward in introducing vital anti-trafficking legislation; however, the Senators faced significant opposition.

LD 512 and LD 1261, had they passed the Maine Legislature, would have addressed the serious gaps that exist under Maine law. LD 512 sought to recognize all children bought and sold for sex as victims of child sex trafficking, rather than offenders of prostitution. Addressing demand, LD 1261 importantly sought to recognize buyers of sex with kids as trafficking offenders, thus acknowledging the role such offenders play in driving the demand for commercially sexually exploited children. Unfortunately, neither of these two objectives were successful.

"We are disappointed that without the passage of LD 512 and the introduced version of LD 1261, minors can still be charged with prostitution and buyers cannot be held culpable under the trafficking law," said Shared Hope Founder and President Linda Smith. "We fear that minors remain especially vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking in Maine."

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 Maine, 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%. However, during that 7 year span, Maine's grade increased only to a D, retaining the lowest score in the nation for laws to combat sex trafficking.

"As we look to the future we are encouraged by the leadership of Senators Diamond and Volk, who are willing to be the brave voices on the issue and, accordingly, to draft strong legislation," said Smith. "We hope that Maine leaders will strengthen their resolve to ensuring that Maine is unwelcoming to child sex trafficking offenders."

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.