

NEW REPORT REFLECTS NEBRASKA'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 new legislation, LB 289, passed this year under the leadership of Senator Pansing Brooks, Nebraska exemplifies this trend with the commitment to target and hold accountable buyers of sex with children.

Shared Hope applauds the leadership of Senator Pansing Brooks, who declared that, "Through the passage of LB 289, Nebraska has sent a strong message to traffickers and buyers that they will be punished with the full weight of the law for the despicable practice of human trafficking". She also noted that LB 289, which significantly increases penalties for buyers, follows previous successful efforts to pass laws that ensure trafficking survivors are treated as victims, not criminals.

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 Nebraska, 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%. Significantly, in that same period of time, Nebraska increased its own grade from an F to a B, and stands as one of only thirteen states to raise its grade three levels.

"Championed by Senator Pansing Brooks and the Women's Fund of Omaha, along with survivor leaders, the Salvation Army, Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers, Nebraska Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Nebraska Attorney General's Office, local law enforcement and many others, LB 289 passed unopposed," shared Meghan Malik, Trafficking Project Manager at the Women's Fund of Omaha. However, Malik noted that, "LB 289 was an important victory, but it was one step in the comprehensive approach we must utilize to combat sex trafficking in Nebraska. Reflecting on the significance of the bill, Malik, stated, "LB 289 shined a light on sex trafficking and sent a strong message to traffickers and buyers that purchasing and selling individuals for sex will not be tolerated in Nebraska. The new law provides critical protections for survivors forced to participate in the trafficking venture as a result of their victimization."

Rachel Pointer, Movement Liaison for Free The People Movement, expressed, "As a survivor of childhood sexual exploitation, and change advocate, the passage of LB 289 was a critical step in showing that we as a state believe the victims of these terrible crimes deserve justice...LB289 is the beginning of justice, not just for other victim survivors, but also for me. Now is when the hard work begins for us."

Malik echoed this point, stating, "LB 289 was an important victory, but it was one step in the comprehensive approach we must utilize to combat sex trafficking in Nebraska.

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.