



**NEW REPORT SHOWS SOUTH DAKOTA MAKING IMPORTANT STEPS FORWARD
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. New legislation, HB 1118, highlights South Dakota's concern for increasing the identification of commercially sexually exploited youth as victims of sex trafficking by removing the "force, fraud, or coercion" requirement when a minor victim under 18 years of age is involved. This critical change mirrors Federal law and the laws in 47 other states and D.C., which recognize that minors under 18 are especially vulnerable to exploitation, thus increasing their susceptibility to trafficking by means beyond force, fraud, or coercion.

South Dakota's strong advocates remarked on the passage of this important bill. "HB 1118 was very much a group effort, with Watertown Initiative and others. Those relationships gave us the opportunity to inform legislators on what we're doing and what we're seeing. Our strength in South Dakota is that we have those relationships built, which allowed us to get HB 1118 in place," said Becky Rasmussen, Executive Director of Call to Freedom.

Sister Teresa Ann Wolf, Director of Watertown Initiative to Prevent Sex Trafficking shared, "The key to success in passing critical sex trafficking legislation in 2017 was the formation of a partnership of a state-wide committee of organizations who were working to prevent trafficking or to provide services and legislators who were willing to sponsor critical sex trafficking legislation."

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 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%. Despite the critical and noteworthy passage of HB 1118, South Dakota maintained its "D" grade, joining just four other states in the country with this score.

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.