



NEW REPORT SHOWS TENNESSEE LEADING THE NATION IN LEGISLATIVE IMPROVEMENT TO COMBAT CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

WASHINGTON, D.C., A report released today by Shared Hope International gives Tennessee the highest score among all 50 states and D.C. for its laws to combat child sex trafficking. With the passage of both HB 605 and SB 553 this legislative session, Tennessee exemplifies a 7-year trend of steadily strengthening its state child sex trafficking laws by increasing protections for survivors, accountability for offenders, and resources for child serving agencies. Advocates celebrated this news and reflected on the importance of collaboration.

"We have been part of a statewide collaborative effort for quite some time, and our score for this year shows that our collective impact approach is yielding results," said Jerry Redman, CEO of The Second Life Chattanooga. "Many agencies and individuals are responsible for this success. Second Life is grateful to be one of our state's four single-point-of-contact, non-governmental agencies that comprise the Tennessee Anti-Slavery Alliance (TASA). Governor Bill Haslam and our state legislators have ensured that our laws serve the survivors and duly punish those engaging in this crime."

"We are grateful for our partners in the Tennessee General Assembly, who've joined us in taking a stand against the injustice of human trafficking," said Mark Gwyn, Director of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. "As we've learned over the past few years, combatting trafficking requires bold, brave leadership from every stakeholder. Each enhancement to Tennessee's law strengthens our message, as a state, that we will do everything we can to help victims become survivors and hold buyers and traffickers accountable in the most serious ways possible."

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 subsequent years, from 59% to 82%.

With Tennessee now leading the nation with a score of 96.5% Redman reflected on what it will take to keep Tennessee at the forefront of this fight, "We celebrate this step forward, but also know we have much work to accomplish on this issue. As the leading state in the U.S. regarding anti-trafficking work, we are committed to improving our work so that eventually we can see this crime eradicated in Tennessee."

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.