



**NEW REPORT REFLECTS WISCONSIN'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. Wisconsin exemplifies this trend with its repeated commitment to address protective responses for survivors and accountability for offenders through law. .

Championed by Representative Jill Billings (D-LaCrosse) and Senator Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls), AB 186 and SB 344, respectively, seek an important clarification under state law by recognizing all commercially sexually exploited youth as child sex trafficking victims, not offenders of prostitution.

"AB 186 may not be a perfect solution, but it is a step in the right direction to ensuring victims understand that they are indeed victims and to perhaps instill trust in the justice system and connect the victim with necessary services so that they may heal and escape the horrendous life as a trafficked individual, said Attorney General Brad Schimel. "If we are going to be successful in building cases against traffickers, our real target, we need victims to be with us, to provide the information we need to unravel the trafficker's network, and to eventually testify in court. If we expect victims to stand with us, they need to know they can trust us to help. This bill will help move us in that direction."

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 Wisconsin, 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, Wisconsin increased its own grade from a D to a B, and stands as one of only 22 states to raise its grade two levels.

Jodi Emerson, Director of Public Policy and Community Relations at Fierce Freedom, spoke of her work driving legal reform in the State, "The Protected Innocence Challenge gives smaller anti-trafficking agencies like ours the knowledge and expertise to talk to elected officials about changes that need to happen in our state. 2017 has been a busy legislative year for us in Wisconsin with several bills currently under consideration to fight the demand and to help our state become more victim centered...It's an exciting time to be an anti-trafficking advocate in Wisconsin."

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.