

### Bill

**HB /SB : Establishing a Work Group to Study Safe Harbor Policy and Services for Youth Victims of Sex Trafficking**

### Sponsors

Delegate / Senator Lee  
House Co-sponsors:

## The Issue

- The term "Safe Harbor" refers to legislation enacted to protect minor survivors of sex trafficking from arrest and prosecution for prostitution.  
  
This is typically accomplished by granting minors complete immunity from prosecution for prostitution, or diverting them from the juvenile or criminal justice system to the child welfare system and/or to trafficking-specific victim services programs.
- Maryland has yet to pass any Safe Harbor legislation, despite the existence of federal legislation recognizing the necessity of Safe Harbor policies. This means that, in Maryland, minors can still be arrested for and charged with prostitution, despite being unable to legally consent to sex.
- In 2014, the "Stop Exploitation through Trafficking Act" passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill promised "preferential consideration" for federal funding opportunities to states that have Safe Harbor legislation or procedures in effect.
- Country-wide, 21 states have implemented Safe Harbor procedures, either through legislative or procedural changes. Examination and analysis of the approaches other states have taken in their implementation of Safe Harbor will aid Maryland in developing a successful Safe Harbor strategy.

## Legislative Solution

Establish a work group tasked with establishing a path forward for the successful implementation of Safe Harbor legislation in Maryland.

## How This Bill Addresses the Issue

- This bill will authorize the formation of an interdisciplinary working group to research how best to implement Safe Harbor policies within the state.
- The bill also specifies which members of the community will staff the work group and requires the production of a report by the work group to be presented to the legislature in a specified amount of time.

