



BILL NO: House Bill 1279
TITLE: Police Training Commission – Training Requirements – Human Trafficking
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 28, 2017
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Amara Legal Center strongly supports the passage of House Bill 1279. The Amara Legal Center is a nonprofit legal services organization which provides free legal services to survivors of sex trafficking in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Under HB 1279, the Police Training Commission would be required to expand its curriculum to include mandatory entrance-level and in-service police training on criminal laws pertaining to human trafficking and on the identification and appropriate treatment of victims of human trafficking. The Amara Legal Center supports this bill because given the nature of the crime and the experiences of the victims, educating police officers is key to effectively combating human trafficking

Through our work with survivors of trafficking, the Amara Legal Center knows that victims of human trafficking are unlikely to self-identify as such to police officers. Victims are often taught not to trust law enforcement and may be coached about what to say to the police or threatened with harm to themselves or their families if they come forward. Therefore, to reach and protect victims of human trafficking, it is particularly important to educate police officers about what human trafficking is and how they can identify victims through other indicators.

Additionally, partnership with victims is crucial to successfully investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of human trafficking. Training officers on the necessity of treating victims of human trafficking as crime victims rather than criminals and on how to connect victims with resources and services to help them recover will increase the likelihood that those victims will be able to aid Maryland in finding and prosecuting perpetrators of trafficking.

Requiring the Police Training Commission to institute regular trainings for Maryland police officers on how to identify and treat victims of human trafficking will greatly enhance Maryland's ability to protect and seek justice for victims of human trafficking. For these reasons, the Amara Legal Center supports HB 1279. We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacie Reimer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stacie Reimer
Executive Director
Amara Legal Center