



BILL NO: House Bill 673
TITLE: Business Regulation – Innkeepers – Records, Human Trafficking Awareness Training, and Hourly Accommodations
COMMITTEE: Economic Matters
HEARING DATE: February 21, 2017
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Amara Legal Center strongly supports the passage of House Bill 673. 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. House Bill 673 would require the Governor’s Office of Crime Control Prevention (GOCCP) and the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR) to develop a specialized training program for employees of lodging establishments on identifying and reporting human trafficking. Additionally, HB 673 would prohibit innkeepers, as defined in Section 15-201 of the Business Regulation Article, from offering an hourly rate for any sleeping accommodation and require innkeepers to maintain records of all guest transactions for at least six months.

The Amara Legal Center supports this bill because the hotel industry is on the front lines of the fight against human trafficking. With the proliferation of online advertisements and the perceived anonymity at many lodging establishments, hotels and motels are among the most common venues for human trafficking and they can be an integral partner in efforts to stop it.

Victims of human trafficking are often among the most vulnerable members of society, are unlikely to know about the reporting mechanisms and support services available to them, and often are unlikely to self-identify as trafficking victims. House Bill 673’s mandatory trainings would target outreach to victims in known trafficking venues and effectively educate individuals likely to come into contact with victims on how to identify and respond to human trafficking.

Adoption of HB 673 would help to prevent, stop, and prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking. By prohibiting hourly rates and mandating maintenance of guest transaction records, HB 673 aims to remove conditions that encourage traffickers to operate out of hotels and motels and allow some innkeepers to knowingly profit from trafficking in their establishment. HB 673’s record keeping requirements for innkeepers would also improve the information available to police officers and prosecutors in their efforts to investigate traffickers and bring them to justice.

This bill would enhance Maryland’s framework for combatting trafficking and reaching trafficking victims by making it more difficult for traffickers to operate in hotels and motels around the state and raise awareness of human trafficking in the hotel industry. For these reasons, the Amara Legal Center supports HB 673. We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacie Reimer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stacie" and last name "Reimer" clearly distinguishable.

Stacie Reimer
Executive Director
Amara Legal Center