



BILL NO: Senate Bill 1017
TITLE: State Government – Human Trafficking Advisory Council – Establishment
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: March 9, 2017
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Amara Legal Center strongly supports the passage of Senate Bill 1017. 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. Senate Bill 1017 would establish the Maryland Human Trafficking Advisory Council, a nongovernmental advisory body composed of survivors of human trafficking. The Amara Legal Center supports this bill because survivors should play an important role in finding solutions to end human trafficking and connect victims with the resources they need.

Through our work, the Amara Legal Center recognizes that each survivor has a unique set of experiences and that engaging survivors from a diverse range of backgrounds is essential to effectively addressing human trafficking. Survivors provide valuable insight for developing and implementing better policies from victim outreach and identification to comprehensive, trauma-focused support services. In 2015 Congress established a first of its kind advisory group composed entirely of trafficking survivors, the United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, and in its first report the group highlighted the need to create additional platforms for survivors to make recommendations on policies and programs related to human trafficking.

The Maryland Human Trafficking Advisory Council established under SB 1017 would be composed of survivors with direct experience with the issue of human trafficking in Maryland and reflect the diversity of survivors and circumstances of trafficking in the state. The Council would review the state's policies and programs related to combatting human trafficking and serve as a valuable resource for the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, the General Assembly and other agencies and organizations across the state.

Engaging survivors and incorporating their experiences and expertise in the policy-making process will help Maryland develop a more effective response to human trafficking. For these reasons, the Amara Legal Center supports SB 1017. We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

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



Stacie Reimer
Executive Director
Amara Legal Center