

BILL NO: House Bill 1115
TITLE: Juvenile justice; human trafficking screening.
COMMITTEE: Courts of Justice; Subcommittee #1
DATE: February 2, 2022
POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chairperson Adams and Subcommittee Members:

Thank you for hearing testimony on House Bill 1115 relating to juvenile justice involved trafficking victims or youth at risk of experiencing sex trafficking victimization.

Shared Hope International has been working in Virginia, across the country, and throughout the globe for over 20 years to guide and support appropriate responses to protect survivors, hold offenders to account, and ultimately prevent the crime entirely. 12 years ago we launched the State Report Card project to assess the status of state's laws and drive legislative progress. In 2020, we released an [updated legislative framework](#) to ensure that the most promising, effective, and survivor-centered policies were driving legislative change. In the process of developing the framework, we received extensive feedback on the importance of increasing identification and responses to child and youth involved in the juvenile justice system who had experienced or were at risk of experiencing sex trafficking victimization. Consequently, in consultation with 200 top anti-trafficking stakeholders from across the U.S., we developed [Policy Goal 2.4](#), recommending that states enact legislation that requires juvenile justice agencies to conduct trauma-informed screening of children and youth at risk of sex trafficking victimization.

[Research demonstrates](#) the intersection between sexual violence, including sex trafficking, and juvenile justice involvement. While experiences of sexual abuse and exploitation, and the [consequential trauma and trauma behaviors](#), increase a youth's likelihood of becoming involved in the juvenile or criminal justice systems, system involvement itself also increases vulnerabilities for exploitation and abuse. However, informed and equipped system stakeholders can mitigate such risks, interrupt cycles of exploitation, and connect impacted youth with vital resources and services. In addition to ensuring juvenile justice stakeholders receive training on identifying and responding to child sex trafficking and trauma, it is critical that such stakeholders and systems adopt and utilize validated screening tools to increase identification and appropriate responses.

HB 1115 importantly provides a pathway to addressing this need by:

- 1) Amending § 16.1-275, requiring any court-ordered medical examination to include trauma-informed screening to identify past human trafficking victimization and determine an appropriate service response;
- 2) Amending § 66-18 to include a trauma-informed screening for human trafficking victimization as part of the requisite medical examination of all children committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice.

While, ideally, all juvenile justice involved youth should be screened for past sex trafficking victimization or risk factors for future exploitation, HB 1115 lays the important groundwork of increasing identification and responses for child and youth survivors.

We are grateful for the Subcommittee's dedication to this issue and respectfully ask for your support.

Sincerely,

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For questions or additional information:
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