



BILL NO: House Bill 1426

COMMITTEE: Health, Welfare, and Institutions Subcommittee #2

HEARING DATE: February 3, 2022

SUBMITTED BY: Sidney E. McCoy, Esq., Board President of the Virginia Coalition Against Human Trafficking

POSITION: SUPPORT

This testimony is written on behalf of the Virginia Coalition Against Human Trafficking (VCAHT), a coalition of service providers, attorneys, survivor-advocates, and community members working to pass survivor-centered human trafficking legislation in the Commonwealth of Virginia. While the Commonwealth has made great strides in its response to human trafficking, our laws are failing survivors. **Shared Hope International has graded Virginia with an “F”** (scoring a 44 out of 100) in their most recent evaluation of states’ response to child sex trafficking. Indeed, Virginia received a failing grade specifically on prevention and training on the identification and response to human trafficking.

I write today asking for your support of HB 1426, a bill that would require healthcare practitioners providing direct care to patients to be trained on the identification and response of human trafficking.

Recent studies have found that anywhere between 50-88 percent of human trafficking victims have accessed health care services during their trafficking situations.¹ However, those same studies found that only 6 percent of health care professionals reported treating a human trafficking survivor during their career.²

The American Public Health Association, in a 2015 statement, acknowledges the severe physical and mental health effects of human trafficking and "calls for professional schools, societies, and certifying bodies to improve training of licensed health professionals and to integrate human trafficking into existing curricula on intimate partner violence, domestic violence, and child and elder abuse."³ Indeed, studies demonstrate continuing education on human trafficking led to increased confidence in the ability to identify and assist victims.⁴

We know from other sectors that when the training is not required, many do not take it voluntarily. Advocates urge using mandates to enhance patient outcomes by providing supplemental education on new and emerging trends and technologies, thereby promoting elevation of and adherence to professional

¹ THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF SEX TRAFFICKING AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR IDENTIFYING VICTIMS IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES, Laura J. Lederer and Christopher A. Wetzel, *Annals of Health Law*, Vol. 23, Issue 1 (2014), <https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Health-Consequences-of-Sex-Trafficking-and-Implications-for-Identifying-Victims-Lederer.pdf>

² On-Ramps, Intersections, and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking, Polaris, (July 1, 2018), <https://polarisproject.org/resources/on-ramps-intersections-and-exit-routes-a-roadmap-for-systems-and-industries-to-prevent-and-disrupt-human-trafficking/>.

³ U.S. STATE LAWS ADDRESSING HUMAN TRAFFICKING: EDUCATION OF AND MANDATORY REPORTING BY HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS, Holly G. Atkinson, et. al, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 111-138 at 128 (2016).

⁴ “While human trafficking differs in important ways from DV . . . Research on the effectiveness of domestic violence education in postgraduate and continuing medical education activities suggest that multifaceted educational interventions for health care providers [. . .] combined with system support interventions [. . .] increase health care providers' knowledge and skills, referrals to resources, and, ultimately, positive outcomes for victims” *Id.* at 129.



standards of practice. Further, mandatory training ensures that training on human trafficking includes core competencies and necessary skillsets for individual clinicians, health care organizations, and academic institutions, including medicine, nursing, mental behavioral health, pharmacy, dentistry, and other health care professions to respond to trafficking. Finally, mandatory training will allow Virginia to provide some oversight on course content and development.

Finally, the fiscal impact of this bill should be minimal, if any at all, as many NGOs and the federal government through the Department of Health and Human Services have created curriculum for this training at little or no cost.

Accordingly, we are requesting favorable action from the Subcommittee on HB 1426 to ensure that frontline workers are equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to identify victims of this outrageous crime and respond appropriately.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions at the email address below.

Respectfully,

Sidney E. McCoy, Esq.
Board President, Virginia Coalition Against Human Trafficking

*For questions or
technical assistance,
contact:
info@vcaht.org*