



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
SAFE CENTER
FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS
MPOWERING THE STATE

SUPPORT, ADVOCACY, FREEDOM, AND EMPOWERMENT CENTER

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 771

TITLE: Health Occupations – Human Trafficking Awareness Training

COMMITTEE: Health

HEARING DATE: February 25th, 2026

POSITION: FAVORABLE

The University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment (SAFE) Center for Human Trafficking Survivors is a comprehensive services, research, and advocacy center for human trafficking survivors. Our mission is to provide survivor-centered and trauma-informed services that empower sex and labor trafficking survivors to heal and reclaim their lives, and to prevent trafficking and better serve survivors through research and policy advocacy. Since 2016, the SAFE Center has provided specialized wrap-around legal, social, crisis intervention, mental health, and economic empowerment services to over 600 human trafficking survivors and their family members in Maryland.

The SAFE Center is an initiative of the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: MPowering the State – a collaboration between the University of Maryland, Baltimore and the University of Maryland, College Park. We are part of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

Healthcare providers who receive training on human trafficking play a critical role in disrupting cycles of victimization in Maryland. When victims are under a trafficker’s control, medical providers may be the only professionals they are permitted to see. HB771 mandates that all healthcare professionals are trained on recognizing indicators of human trafficking, delivering trauma informed responses, and referring patients with indicators to specialized service providers.

In the SAFE Center’s experience, human trafficking training for healthcare professionals has shown to be an effective way to increase identification of survivors in a medical setting. In 2019, the SAFE Center partnered with the Maryland Hospital Association (MHA), forensic nurses, and survivors to develop [Human Trafficking Guidelines for Healthcare Providers](#), which offered best practices for providers to recognize, support, and care for survivors of trafficking. These guidelines offer a trauma-informed, step-by-step guide for meeting the needs of and empowering survivors through the Serve, Identify, Respond, and eValuate (SIRV) model, which has been voluntarily adopted by all 46 MHA member hospitals statewide.

Since developing these guidelines, the SAFE Center has trained almost all healthcare providers and staff at the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center in Prince George's County on human trafficking indicators and established a trafficking response and referral pathway. In this program, we discuss the definitions of sex and labor trafficking, the SIRV trauma-informed care model, physical, behavioral, and emotional indicators of trafficking, and reporting pathways for connecting survivors with service providers like the SAFE Center. As a result of our trainings, the SAFE Center is now receiving an increased number of referrals from trained medical care providers in Maryland, ensuring more survivors can access the resources they deserve.

HB771 will vastly expand the number of healthcare providers who are able to safely and appropriately respond to human trafficking risks for their patients by leveraging existing training tools in Maryland, such as those managed by the SAFE Center.

For these reasons, **the University of Maryland SAFE Center for Human Trafficking Survivors urges a favorable report on House Bill 771.**

Sincerely,

Susan Esserman
Founder and CEO
University of Maryland SAFE Center for Human Trafficking Survivors