



**BILL NUMBER:** Senate Bill 473

**TITLE:** Public Utilities - For-Hire Drivers and Transportation Network Operators - Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Training and Liability

**COMMITTEE:** Finance

**HEARING DATE:** February 18th, 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.

As a member of the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Committee, the SAFE Center strongly supports SB473 for the reasons the Legislative Committee stated in its testimony:

1. SB473 will empower Maryland drivers to identify potential cases of exploitation and respond in a way that protects their own safety and reduces risks of harm to victims.
2. SB473 stipulates that licensed taxicab drivers, for-hire drivers, and transportation network operators may not be held civilly or criminally liable for reporting or responding in good faith to a suspected incident of human trafficking, which reduces an important potential barrier to reporting of human trafficking concerns to law enforcement.
3. By integrating human trafficking prevention training into existing regulatory structures for licensing of for-hire drivers and transportation network operators, SB 473 minimizes administrative burden while also promoting consistent statewide training.

Targeted training for for-hire drivers and transportation network operators as required by SB473 is important: Since traffickers often rely on taxicabs and transportation network services to transport victims, they may witness the exploitation of victims and be in a position to identify

trafficking victims or individuals who may be vulnerable to trafficking. The required training specified in the legislation on how to recognize trafficking victims, respond appropriately, and connect individuals with resources will serve to support survivors at risk, hold traffickers accountable, as well as to prevent trafficking.

At the SAFE Center, we have seen cases where traffickers used for-hire driver services to transport victims and thus to unwittingly facilitate the trafficking. With this legislation in place, there is a chance that a trained driver could play a role in reporting trafficking and helping to lead survivors to services and safety.

For these reasons, **the University of Maryland SAFE Center for Human Trafficking Survivors urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 473.**

Sincerely,

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