



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Honorable Mark Conway
CHAIR

HEARING NOTES

25-0036R

Informational Hearing – Human Trafficking Investigations and Prosecutions

Hearing Date: 2/17/2026

Hearing Start Time: 1:00 PM

Hearing End Time: 4:00 PM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

Total Estimated Attendance: 40

Committee Members in Attendance:

- **Chair** Mark Conway
- Danielle McCray
- Paris Gray
- Antonio Glover
- **Vice Chair** Zac Blanchard
- Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer
- Phylicia Porter

Additional Councilmembers in Attendance

- Odette Ramos
-

MAJOR SPEAKERS

(This is NOT an attendance record.)

- Tom Stack – Chair, Baltimore City Human Trafficking Collaborative
 - Debra Holbrook – Chair of Medical Subcommittee and Director of Forensic Nursing at Mercy Medical Center
-

NOTES

- Chair Conway began the hearing and introduced the members in attendance
- Councilwoman Porter offered some opening remarks
 - To obtain updates from the Human Trafficking Collaborative
 - Thanked members who appeared before the committee today
 - Traffickers target all sorts of vulnerable communities, regardless of gender, status, etc.
 - Council has a responsibility to understand operations on the ground
 - Must ensure local law enforcement is properly trained to respond
- Councilwoman Ramos also gave some opening remarks
- Chair Conway acknowledged the work of Councilman Kristerfer Burnett

- Councilman Burnett was acknowledged with citations from the City Council President and Mayor
- Councilwoman Porter also acknowledged an award received by the collaborative
- Chair updates
 - Chair Update – Tom Stack
 - See presentation
 - Outlined overall work of collaborative, including partners
 - 5 subcommittees
 - Victim’s services
 - Law enforcement
 - Medical
 - legislative
 - public awareness
 - MONSE grant
 - Distributed over \$1.8 million to more than 10 organizations
 - More than 1030 people trained in 2025
 - Medical Committee
 - Simple goals
 - How to screen
 - Design and implement protocols
 - Victim services
 - Recent focus on marginalized populations
 - Law enforcement
 - Brings agencies together to share intelligence
 - Also brings in victims services to improve relationship
 - Legislative
 - Working with other jurisdictions to review success of legislative efforts
 - Public awareness
 - Launched website with resources and information for professionals
 - 2026 priorities
 - Increased community training
 - Awareness campaign
 - Annual resource fair
 - Engagement strategy
- Cases and Criminal Investigation Updates
 - BPD
 - Focus has been on most vulnerable populations
 - Victim Services
 - Engaged with community partners
 - 2026 plans
 - Trainings partnered with MONSE
 - State’s Attorney
 - Unable to prosecute cases because we have not received any cases
 - These cases take months, years to build
 - Need to work more collaboratively to build

- Brooklyn DA has a specific traffickers unit with analysts dedicated to getting records like Cash App receipts, etc.
 - BCFD
 - Train because human trafficking victims can be difficult to identify
 - Mercy BlueDot
 - Mobile to a variety of locations
 - Common theme that agencies were only open 9-5
 - Shared the expansion model all over the country and world
 - Provides a host of responses, free of charge to victim-patient
 - TurnAround
 - Rape crisis center and domestic violence response organization
 - Social Services
 - Operates under state policy for how to coordinate and deliver services to victims of human trafficking
 - Center for Hope
- Questions
 - Chair Conway
 - How sophisticated are the human trafficking rings
 - Can vary from a mother trafficking a daughter for rent to sophisticated organizations that are much harder to investigate
 - most of the sex trafficking in Baltimore is not particularly sophisticated
 - Victims are not calling 911, they rarely know they are victims
 - Teams check internet ads regularly
 - Some children traffic themselves
 - Mental health and substance abuse issues also cause significant problems
 - Handling complex cases requires collaboration
 - CM Ramos
 - What is preventing us from sending cases to the State's Attorney's Office?
 - Interviews received by state's attorney did not provide sufficient details in order to satisfy the elements of a crime to argue accordingly to a jury
 - SAO ask for records that are then not followed up on
 - Will discuss specifics in detail between agencies
 - MONSE training should improve officers' assessment of facts and interviews
 - Will the SAO be participating in that or working through other trainings?
 - Have brought in partners to guide how we build cases
 - CM Gray
 - How do Baltimore prosecution rates compare to peer cities
 - Can't speak directly to numbers
 - Other jurisdictions are a bit busier on this subject, some have a dedicated unit
 - What is the relationship between victims units and district attorneys offices in other jurisdictions?
 - Is the cities current response under resourced?
 - Under resourced – spread too thin

- BPD suggests it is doing everything possible
 - Case numbers used to be higher because of interactions with the victims of trafficking
 - Those cases stopped being prosecuted so enforcement went down
 - CM Glover
 - What is the disconnect between BPD and SAO
 - SAO does not always hear back about requests for additional information
 - How many cases have been charged as a result of BPD investigations over the past 3 years
 - The department was realigned at the end of 2024, leadership is new
 - We do need to align better with SAO
 - What other law enforcement agencies participate? This should be an all-hands approach
 - BPD works with many law enforcement agencies
 - All those on the collaborative
 - Also have task force officers who are assigned to FBI and homeland security
 - Several cases have been prosecuted federally
 - Chair Conway – sounds like we may need a BlueDot for BPD, to build a rapport to help
 - Most effective way to ensure that a victim is ready to engage with criminal justice is to introduce resources immediately
 - CM Porter
 - How many dedicated beds exist in Baltimore today
 - TurnAround does not have a limit to how many can be sheltered
 - Only one provider has dedicated housing
 - Loving Arms has five slots for boys and five for girls
 - There has been a concern regarding the space for youth
 - Longterm housing options for survivors
 - There are none in the city
 - CM Blanchard
 - We have not discussed elder trafficking much today, please speak to what that entails and what we are seeing
 - Exploitation of people on benefits like social security, snap, etc.
- Public Testimony
 - Loving Arms – this is an epidemic
 - We are about 10 years behind responding to circumstances impacting minors
 - Traffickers offer a safe environment
 - There are not beds available for 16 and 17 year olds
 - These organizations lack resources
 - Araminta – echo complexity of these crimes
 - Should also have blue dot for child welfare services
 - Training needs to happen
 - Systems need to allow creativity
 - Some kids needs treatment centers outside of their current environment
 - Catholic Charities

- Many interactions with different levels of law enforcement
 - BPD does not have a policy on human trafficking
 - covered under sexual assault, human trafficking is more complex
 - Everyone should take a victim response training
- CM Ramos offered some closing remarks
 - Thanked the Chair for the conversation and highlight of the work that is ongoing
 - There is undoubtedly room for improvement
 - Thanks everyone for their hard work

Hearing Packet in bill file? ----- YES NO N/A
Attendance Sheet in bill file?----- YES NO N/A
Vote Record in bill file? ----- YES NO N/A
Agency reports read? ----- YES NO N/A
Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded? ----- YES NO N/A
Certification of advertising/posting notices in the bill file? ----- YES NO N/A
Evidence of notification to property owners in bill file? ----- YES NO N/A

Notes by: Ethan Navarre
Notes Date: 2/17/2026

Direct Inquiries to: Ethan.Navarre@baltimorecity.gov