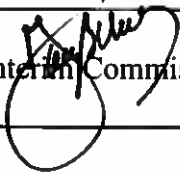



F R O M	Name & Title	Mary Beth Haller, Esq., Interim Commissioner 	Health Department  AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject: Position:	CC #18-0296 FAVORABLE W/ AMENDMENT		

To: President and Members  
of the City Council  
c/o 409 City Hall

November 27, 2018

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #18-0296, entitled, "Licensing and Regulation – National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline Information Sign Posting." This legislation would require adult-entertainment businesses, food services facilities, hotels, licensed construction contracting services, and massage establishments to post a National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline information sign in designated areas.

Council Bill #18-0296 represents a prudent, common-sense step towards building awareness of human trafficking and connecting victims to services. Between July 2013 and July 2018, over 440 cases of child sex trafficking were reported to the Department of Social Services in Maryland, a majority of which involved Maryland residents between the ages of 14 and 17. Nationally, between 14,500 and 17,500 individuals are trafficked each year.<sup>1</sup>

The concerning prevalence of human trafficking cases has prompted a majority of U.S. states to adopt legislation similar to #18-0296.<sup>2</sup> In 2018, North Carolina passed provisions that would require various businesses and hospitals to hang posters advertising the national human trafficking hotline. During a press conference concerning these provisions, North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein indicated that "human trafficking is a heinous but poorly understood crime" and "these signs will let victims know there is help on the other end of a phone call and help educate the public so we can look for the telltale signs of trafficking."<sup>3</sup> His comments highlight the importance of public awareness legislation like #18-0296 as a part of a larger strategy to combat trafficking.

Human trafficking is a severe violation of human rights, and a serious public health issue. The physical and behavioral health implications of trafficking cannot be understated. Victims often experience significant physical abuse, injury, physical exhaustion, and even starvation.

<sup>1</sup> Council Bill – 18-029, <https://baltimore.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3703128&GUID=68D5EC33-EECE-49D1-954A-053782F64139&Options=ID|Text|&Search=18-029>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation. (2018). *Compendium of Human Trafficking Awareness Poster State Laws*. [https://cms.dot.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/pictures/HT\\_Awareness\\_Poster\\_Laws.pdf](https://cms.dot.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/pictures/HT_Awareness_Poster_Laws.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, F. (2018, March 23). *State to post signs in effort to combat human-trafficking crimes*. <https://carolinapublicpress.org/27723/27723/>

Sexual assault, which is often a characteristic of trafficking experiences, can cause severe physical and psychological trauma. Sustained physical and sexual abuse as a result of trafficking puts victims at a significantly higher risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, substance use, and in extreme cases, self-mutilation or suicide.

Victims forced to work in the commercial sex trade are also more susceptible to STDs, unwanted pregnancy, and other various gynecological issues.<sup>4</sup> Labor trafficking victims are at a heightened risk of developing chronic back, respiratory, visual, auditory, and cardiovascular problems as a result of dangerous working conditions. Exacerbating these health implications is the trafficking victims' lack of access to quality healthcare. Victims are consistently denied preventative care and often treated by unqualified, unregulated individuals hired by the trafficker.<sup>5</sup>

Considering the lasting, severe health effects of trafficking, a coordinated and effective public health response is paramount. This bill is an important part of this response. It prudently uses data to focus its efforts on the venues in which most human trafficking victims are identified. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline Data Report, hotels, adult-entertainment businesses, food service facilities, construction services sites, and massage establishments are all among the most frequent venues for labor and sex trafficking.<sup>6</sup>

From the perspective of BCHD, enforcement may be somewhat cumbersome. While BCHD's Bureau of Environmental Health currently inspects food service facilities, it does not have the capacity, including manpower and state authority, to inspect massage establishments. For this reason, **BCHD proposes amending #18-0296 to remove massage establishments from BCHD's oversight.** With respect to food service facilities oversight, BCHD anticipates a nominal burden on existing resources.

Altogether, #18-0296 provides an effective framework for business compliance and accountability. It will expand knowledge about human trafficking, promote reporting, and help increase the utilization of victim services—all of which are BCHD priorities. For the forgoing reasons, the Baltimore City Health Department urges a **favorable with amendment report** on Council Bill #18-0296.

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<sup>4</sup> The Advocates For Human Rights. (2005, September 1). *Health Consequences of Trafficking*. [http://www.stopvaw.org/health\\_consequences\\_of\\_trafficking](http://www.stopvaw.org/health_consequences_of_trafficking)

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (N.D.). *Resources: Common Health Issues Seen in Victims of Human Trafficking*. [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/health\\_problems\\_seen\\_in\\_traffick\\_victims.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/health_problems_seen_in_traffick_victims.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> National Human Trafficking Hotline. (2017, September). *2016 National Hotline Annual Report*. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/2016%20National%20Report.pdf>