

BILL NO: House File 1943
TITLE: Child welfare and maltreatment provisions modified.
COMMITTEE: House Committee on Human Services Finance and Policy
DATE: March 24, 2021
POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chairperson Schultz, Vice Chairperson Bahner and Committee Members:

Shared Hope International is a national NGO mobilizing legislative change at the state and federal levels to protect youth survivors of sex trafficking and holds offenders to account. Through our ongoing legal research, legislative technical assistance, and field assessments, we are uniquely positioned to evaluate and share promising practices and sustainable solutions for addressing this crime. Since we first commenced our state policy work 13 years ago, we have consistently looked to and recognized Minnesota for developing “gold standard” policies and practices. House File 1943 reflects the state’s trend of pushing the envelope and striving towards responses that are smart, sustainable, and impactful.

HF 1943 recognizes, and seeks to overcome, the challenge of utilizing existing systems and processes to respond to a robust and relatively new crime. Current law problematically requires Child Protective Services (CPS) to investigate non-familial sex trafficking cases in the same or similar manner as would be required for familial cases. As such, this process risks sweeping non-offending parents or caregivers through an adversarial system that potentially undermines the agency’s ability to provide meaningful support to both the child victim and family. Simultaneously, CPS agencies are tasked with duties that far exceed the role such agencies were originally created to play.

HF 1943 creates an alternative approach that would support CPS’ ability to provide safety planning, comprehensive services, and ongoing care to exploited children and their families without being burdened with the task of investigating non-familial exploiters. This alternative, third-track approach is considered an innovative solution for addressing an ongoing challenge faced by nearly every state in this country. Lastly, this bill creates an important option for county-level CPS multidisciplinary teams to include agencies addressing commercial sexual exploitation among youth, recognizing the increased positive outcomes when such voices are represented and included.

The provisions contained in HF 1943 have been diligently researched and thoughtfully developed, and we are proud to adamantly support this bill and ask for yours as well. We are grateful for the Committee’s willingness to hear this bill and are happy to provide any additional information or responses to questions.

Sincerely,

Sarah Bendtsen, J.D.
Director of State Legislative Advocacy

For questions or additional information:
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