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A Racial Impact Analysis of HB 994: Human Trafficking

Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, Virginia Commonwealth University

Staci Boone

Traci DeShazor

Selonia Miles

Katina Williams

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A Racial Impact Analysis of HB 994: Human Trafficking

A project of the Minority Political Leadership Institute Class of 2014

Prepared by: Staci Boone, Traci DeShazor, Selonia Miles, and
Katina Williams

Project Description

Human Trafficking has become an international crisis that has caused a devastating impact on the Commonwealth of Virginia. The purpose of this report is to examine the racial equity impact of Virginia House Bill 944. HB 994 was introduced to the House by Delegate Barbara Comstock, along with 13 other members of the House and was passed by the House of Delegates and was Passed Indefinitely in Courts of Justice with letter in 2014. This Bill, as initially introduced, would have made it a felony to participate in Human Trafficking by expanding the definition of abduction/kidnapping. It also would have provided additional protection for minors by taking away the defense of consent. This report reviews the practices of Human Trafficking and provides an overview of how HB 944 being passed indefinitely harms minority communities.

Legislative Overview

Virginia's Legislative Information System (2014) indicates that HB 994 directs that the Virginia Code Commission add the term "human trafficking" to the language of Section § 18.2-47 of the Virginia Code. This section currently includes *abduction and kidnapping defined; punishment*. The passage of HB 994 would allow for human trafficking to be included in Section § 18.2-47 and that particular section would change to, "Abduction, human trafficking, and kidnapping defined, penalty." The purpose of this is to emphasize the section of the code's applicability to offenses involving human trafficking. This legislation does not have any fiscal impact.

Summary as passed House

Human trafficking offenses. Directs the Virginia Code Commission to add the term "human trafficking" to the catch line of § 18.2-47 ("Abduction and kidnapping defined; punishment") in order to emphasize that section's applicability to offenses involving human trafficking (2014).

Summary as introduced

Human trafficking; penalties. Creates new felonies for trafficking in persons for forced labor or sexual servitude. The bill adds definitions of coercion, commercial sexual activity, debt bondage, and serious harm (2014).

HB 994 passed the House by a vote of 97-Y and 0-N and the Senate (Passed by indefinitely in Courts of Justice with letter) by a vote of 9-Y 6-N (2014).

HB 994 passed in the House of Delegates 97-0 and appeared to have bipartisan support. Unfortunately, when the Bill made it to the Senate, it was Passed-By Indefinitely in Courts of Justice with letter. The Bill ultimately failed, but it does have the opportunity to be considered again in another session.

When HB 994 passed the House of Delegates 97-0 the Bill called for a change in the existing statute in the Code of Virginia; however, prior to making it to the Senate, changes were made by the House Committee for Courts of Justice that would ultimately only change the name of the existing statute. As Miller states,

Delegate Barbara Comstock's original version would have added an entirely new statute to the Code of Virginia. Comstock's version would have been about human trafficking. But Turner is simply wrong when he says, "all 32 House Democrats voted to pass" the bill, because Comstock's 600-word version was scrapped by the House Committee for Courts of Justice, and replaced with the one-line version that did nothing other than change the name of an existing statute. That, and that alone, is what 32 Democrats voted for. That, and that alone, is what Wexton and the others voted to pass by. If Comstock's anti-trafficking bill was "killed" by anyone, it was killed by the House Committee on Courts of Justice, not by anyone in the state Senate (Miller, 2014).

Explanations

There are three primary components relative to human trafficking: the act, the means, and the purpose. These items can be defined as:

The Act- (what happens) the recruitment, transportation, and either harboring or transfer of persons trafficked.

The Means- (how) the mechanism by which persons are trafficked is defined as the threat or use of coercion---both physical and psychological to abduct or deceive a person into trafficking.

The Purpose- (why) human trafficking occurs leads to its economic impact or costs. The purpose of human trafficking's exploitation is usually sexual in nature and driven by the desire for money, sex, and labor.

HB 994 directed the Virginia Code Commission to add the term "human trafficking" to the catch line of § 18.2-47 ("Abduction and kidnapping defined; punishment") in order to emphasize that section's applicability to offenses involving human trafficking not only makes the definition of trafficking more inclusive but also makes the economic costs more measurable. "Within the next 10 years crime experts expect human trafficking to surpass drug and arms trafficking in its incidence, cost to human wellbeing and profitability to criminals" (VCC, 2014).

Racial Impact Analysis

The results of this Racial Impact Analysis are limited due relatively new attention and awareness of this issue in Virginia. There are very few agencies that are equipped to identify and provide support to victims; the agencies that do specialize in human trafficking have scarce resources. The men and women who have been victimized by human trafficking are worthy of all the support that can be provided to them, but the sad reality is that the level of support they

need is simply not available at this time. Table 1 provides an overview of the barriers human trafficking victims confront.

Table 1: Challenges of Human Trafficking Victims

Barriers/Challenges	Percent of Agencies
Lack of adequate resources	58%
Problems identifying victims of human trafficking	55%
Lack of adequate training	55%
Lack of adequate funding	45%
Language Concerns	35%
Safety Concerns	35%
Lack of formal rules/ regulations	33%
Lack of needed services	31%
Lack of in-house procedures	29%
Lack of knowledge about victims rights	20%
Coordination with local agencies	18%
Coordination with federal agencies	16%
Coordination with state agencies	11%
Service providers who feel a lack of support and isolation	11%
Other	9%

The ability to recognize human trafficking as it is occurring is a key component in both prevention and intervention. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, describes human trafficking as:

- a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Trafficking victims can be divided into the following three categories:

- Minors (under age 18) induced into commercial sex;
- Adults age 18 or over involved in commercial sex via force, fraud, or coercion;
- Children and adults forced to perform labor and/or services in conditions of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery, via force, fraud, or coercion.

Victims are trafficked for a wide variety of purposes, such as commercial sex, agricultural work, or housekeeping, yet they all share the loss of one of our world’s most cherished rights—freedom.

Effects in Virginia

A troubling finding of this report is that although there are organizations in place to combat Human Trafficking, these organizations do not have the ability to provide detailed data, particularly in terms of race. The Polaris Project, a leading organization in the fight against human trafficking, is able to track the number of calls the National Human Trafficking Resource Center by state, but are unable to provide information on factors such as race or ethnicity.

Table 2: Ranking of States by Number of Human Tracking Calls

1. District of Columbia	6. Virginia
2. Texas	7. Nevada
3. Maryland	8. Washington
4. Oregon	9. Florida
5. California	10. New Mexico

Although Virginia is ranked 12th in state population, it currently ranks 6th in human trafficking calls placed to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHRTC) (Polaris, 2013). Currently, there is very limited data available on the demographics of human trafficking victims. It has often been described as a silent, underground, and complex crime. In April 2011, The U.S. Department of Justice released a special report entitled, “Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008-2010”. This report provided the most detailed information regarding human trafficking occurrences in the United States by documenting the number of incidents reported to local and state law enforcement agencies. The report also provides the only clear data regarding demographics of victims (USDOJ, 2011).

The Polaris Project also produced a report on the calls received on the hotline from 2007-2012. To date, these two documents remain the primary sources of information for human trafficking data. In Virginia, the number of calls has increased from 143 to 465. Of the calls received by the hotline from Virginia in 2012, the NHTRC identified approximately 20 percent (n=95) as

potential trafficking situations based on the level of information and demonstrated key indicators. Of those categorized as “high” (n=36), 10 (28 percent) were in regard to labor trafficking, 24 (67 percent) in regard to sex trafficking, and 2 were considered “other” (6 percent) (Polaris, 2013).

The report divides labor trafficking into two categories: commercial industry labor or unregulated labor. Commercial industry labor generally takes place in hair salons, hotels and bars. Unregulated labor is described as day labor. Sex trafficking is categorized in three areas as prostitution, commercial sex acts or sexual exploitation of a child. In this report, there were 527 confirmed human trafficking victims in 389 confirmed incidents (Polaris, 2013).

Unfortunately, despite our attempts we were unable to find out more specific racial/ethnic data. Organizations that are tasked with tracking crime in Virginia have not begun to conduct increased operations. Even the Polaris Project does not have solid data on the racial background of human trafficking victims. We also reached out to the Virginia State Police who informed us that although they have been tasked to track information regarding human trafficking, they have not yet started this task. In addition to this, we met with the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services and this agency was unable to provide data as well. In addition, the following organizations provide service to victims of human trafficking:

- Courtney’s House
- Tahirih Justice Center
- International Rescue Committee
- The Gray Haven Project
- Richmond Justice Initiative

Similar to the state organizations, these organizations did not have any specific racial/ethnic data that we could use to assist in our analysis.

Gender and Age

According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2011), 2515 incidents of human trafficking were investigated between 2008 and 2010. Of the cases investigated, 82 percent were classified as sex trafficking cases; of that percentage, 48 percent were classified as adult cases while 40 percent were classified as cases involving children. The remaining 14 percent were considered to be labor trafficking cases. Only a small number (6 percent) of victims were reported to be of undocumented gender.

Females constitute 91 percent (477) of the victims while 9 percent (49) were identified as males. The study also found that most of the victims were ages 24 and under with a significant number being teenagers. The breakdown of ages was: 49 percent ages 17 or younger; 30 percent between the ages of 18 and 24; and just 18 percent over the age of 25 (USDJ, 2011).

Virginia does not currently have a source to collect the gender and age data of the calls made to the NHTRC hotline. Careful review of the national human trafficking data and census data for

the Commonwealth of Virginia does not provide a clear predictor of the potential increase of human trafficking incidents but highlights a huge disparity. According to the 2010 census conducted by the United States Census Bureau, 50.9 percent of Virginia's population is female, 3.4 percent of females were between the ages of 15 and 19 while 3.5 percent of females were between the ages of 20 and 24. If Virginia follows the trend of national data with a large portion of human trafficking incidences being females in the 17 to 24 age range and the percentage of Virginians within that age range is so small, there is an overwhelming disparity. This disparity would require targeted outreach to this age group with a focus on females (USDOJ, 2011).

In 2013, Secretary of the Commonwealth Janet Kelly stated in a press release, "Traffickers often prey on our most vulnerable citizens – runaway youths, foster children, and kids without a strong sense of identity – in order to make a profit (Alexandria News, 2013)." Virginia Department of Social Services provides the following statement regarding youth who age out of foster care, "While Virginia has a very low rate of children in foster care, it ranks first among the states in the percentage of youth (25 percent) who age out of foster care" (Virginia Performs, 2014). This is a significant percentage of youth who may be targeted by traffickers because of their limited support systems. Also, among the most vulnerable are youth who are considered runaways. The National Runaway Safeline recorded 1,317 calls from Virginia teens seeking assistance, and across the country, 62 percent of the calls were from youth between the ages of 16 and 21 (USDHHS-AFDC, 2013).

More targeted outreach and prevention resources should be focused on these vulnerable individuals in Virginia. Although not runaways, homeless youth are almost just as vulnerable as them because of their inability to have stable shelter. On a single night in January 2013 we found 33 percent of those living in shelters or on the street in the United States were under the age of 24. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires a "point in time" count of individuals who are experiencing homelessness across the United States on the same night. On this night across the country, 199,690 children and youth were counted as homeless. 46,924 were unaccompanied (meaning they were not with an adult); 86 percent were between the ages of 18 and 24 while 13.2 percent were under the age of 18 (HUD, 2013).

Race and Ethnicity

The research did not indicate any major disparities in ethnic backgrounds with 20 percent identified as Caucasians, 32 percent African American and 25 percent identified as Hispanic/Latino origin; however, the race data of Caucasians and African Americans excluded the percentage of those with Hispanic/Latino origin. Additionally, a majority of identified victims are U.S. citizens. Sixty-six percent of those reported were U.S. citizens compared to only 19 percent reported as undocumented individuals. A review of the data could conclude that victims of human trafficking are most likely young and female with no special disposition to race except for the fact that 16 percent of the U.S. population is Hispanic and 12 percent is African American.

When compared to the census data for the state of Virginia, 67 percent are white and 19 percent are African American and only 8 percent of Virginia's population is Hispanic. Once again there is a lack of data specific to the racial demographics of individuals reported in the call numbers from Virginia. Following the trends of national data, the percentage of African Americans and individuals identified as Hispanic/Latino origin are over-represented in the number of human trafficking victims identified nationwide. If the data remains true for Virginia after race specific data is available, there could be a huge disparity. Vulnerable populations are more susceptible to exploitation. A vulnerable population in Virginia identified by race are those living in poverty. Thirty-four percent of African Americans in Virginia live below the poverty line while 10 percent of Hispanics/Latinos live below the poverty line. The percentage of African Americans living below the poverty line in Virginia is extremely disproportionate to the number of African Americans living in Virginia.

The Federation For American Immigration Reform website reports, "While anyone can become a victim of trafficking, illegal aliens are highly vulnerable to being trafficked due to a combination of factors, including lack of legal status and protections, limited language skills and employment options, poverty and immigration-related debts, and social isolation. They are often victimized by traffickers from a similar ethnic or national background, on whom they may be dependent for employment or support in the foreign country" (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2014). Illegal immigrants often avoid connection with mainstream resources and the current state of immigration laws does not encourage individuals to seek out resources. The silence of this population creates a great opportunity for them to be exploited. Virginia should pay very close attention to its population of illegal immigrants. In Virginia, 2.7 percent of the population is illegal immigrants and 3.9 percent are a part of its labor force. Advocacy efforts for immigration reform should utilize human trafficking to help advocate for change. Although Virginia has been a state that has maintained one of the lower unemployment rates during the recession, a lack of education and employment options for this population creates another opportunity for exploitation(Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2014).

Service to Victims

In September 2012, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services published a Human Trafficking Services Needs Assessment Survey. These survey responses were from victim witness service providers, domestic violence/sexual assault service providers, and probation and corrections agencies. These sources appear to be discouraged by the lack of resources, support to deal with the complex issues human trafficking victims face, lack of training and their overall ability to support the victims. Some key findings of this survey include:

- Overall 53 percent of all responding agencies do not know whether or not there is a human trafficking services organization in their local service area.
- Very few have attended formal training on the topic and none have procedures on how to serve human trafficking victims.

- Over three-quarters of the respondents said that trafficking victims have more severe problems and more complex needs than other victims they serve, and often involve mental health, legal, distrust, and trauma-related issues.
- Trafficking victims' most-needed services include: food, emergency housing, sexual assault services, counseling, and case management/coordination of services.
- Over 80 percent said their agency/organization is unable to adequately meet the needs of trafficking victims. Further, 42 percent of agencies estimate trafficking victims require services for about 3 months or more.
- The need to improve collaboration and outreach is supported by the finding that trafficking victims typically learn about services from referrals and community outreach.
- The three most critical barriers/challenges to providing services to trafficking victims are a lack of adequate resources, problems identifying trafficking victims, and a lack of adequate training.
- Trafficking victims may not seek out services due to fear of the system, fear of retaliation, and lack of knowledge about available services.
- Eighty percent of respondents feel more training is needed to improve the provision of services to trafficking victims (VADCJS, 2012).

Recommendations

Based on this research, there are four primary recommendations focused on increasing human trafficking awareness and ending its practice.

First, there is a need for increased public awareness and advocacy about human trafficking. In recent years, advocacy around human trafficking has increased—becoming more prevalent with the release of Hollywood films such as *Taken* starring Liam Neeson and the disappearance of more than 300 Nigerian girls; however, much more can be done to enhance awareness around this important issue. The Polaris Project, the nation's leading advocacy organization on human trafficking, works to promote awareness around human trafficking but little focus is placed on correlating factors including gangs, prostitution, and poverty and the impact on our vulnerable youth.

Second, victim services must be enhanced to better support human trafficking victims and survivors. As outlined in Virginia's 2012 Department of Criminal Justice Services Victims Services Report, more safe havens are needed and enhanced training on how to best assist those affected by human trafficking.

Third, there is a need for strong legislation designed to end human trafficking in Virginia. At the core of ending human trafficking remains in legislation. According to a recently released report by the Polaris Project, ranking states in 10 areas including legislation and law enforcement training around human trafficking, Virginia ranks among the highest with laws focused on increasing awareness and eradicating this issue. While many strides have been made in this area, Virginia still fails to have a human trafficking commission and task force to directly address the issue. Additionally, Virginia is lacking a statute to provide victims of human

trafficking with the ability to seek civil damages from their traffickers as well as a statute that permits victims to have convictions for prostitution while trafficked removed from their criminal records.

Fourth, human trafficking demographic data should be greatly enhanced. Reported data surrounding the issue remains limited with the National Human Trafficking Center only reporting human trafficking related calls to the center based around the location from which they are coming. Expanding data collection to include the types of trafficking cases being reported and victim country of origin, age, gender, and family background can further detail contributing factors (i.e. gangs, bribery). There are estimates that over 1,000,000 people are trafficked internationally annually. The economic costs of human trafficking are two-fold. For consumers or those that benefit from trafficked persons whether through forced labor or sexual acts, the economic costs weigh heavily on supply and demand. Just as in the economy, the two must remain in balance to keep cost reduced. As awareness increases, the costs become higher, and the tightening of laws have made it increasingly difficult to harbor persons and force them into labor and sexual acts.

We recommend that states such as the Commonwealth of Virginia focus its efforts on research and collecting more data---better profiling the victim, strengthening legislation to better protect victims, creating a task force and/or human trafficking commission to enhance the focus on the issue, advocacy and outreach, creating more safe havens, and increasing training to better support victims of human trafficking.

Conclusion

As originally proposed HB 994 would deter those who ventured into human trafficking by further demonstrating that Virginia does not tolerate exploitation in any way, shape, or form. Since this legislation was not enacted, a large portion of the minority community has been left vulnerable. In order to properly combat this international crisis, the Commonwealth must revisit legislation that will penalize those responsible for these heinous acts.

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Human Trafficking...
 Because *every* life matters.




Team 4
A Racial Impact Analysis of HB 994

Staci Boone, Traci DeShazor, Selonia Miles, Katina Williams



- Issue Context
- Project Description
- Legislative Overview
- Issue Background
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- The Commonwealth: A Snapshot
 - Contributing Factors
 - Making the Connection: Correlations
- Recommendations
 - Advocacy
 - Resources
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- Q & A

Agenda



- Defining the Issue: Human Trafficking
- The Legislation: HB 994
- Racial Equity Impact Analysis
- The Commonwealth
- Recommendations



Project Description

House Bill 994 or HB 994 directs that the Virginia Code Commission add the term **“human trafficking”** to the language of Section § 18.2-47 of the Virginia Code.

This section currently includes abduction and kidnapping defined; punishment. The passage of HB 994 will now allow for human trafficking to also be included in Section § 18.2-47 and that particular section will now read as follows:

“Abduction, human trafficking, and kidnapping defined, penalty.”

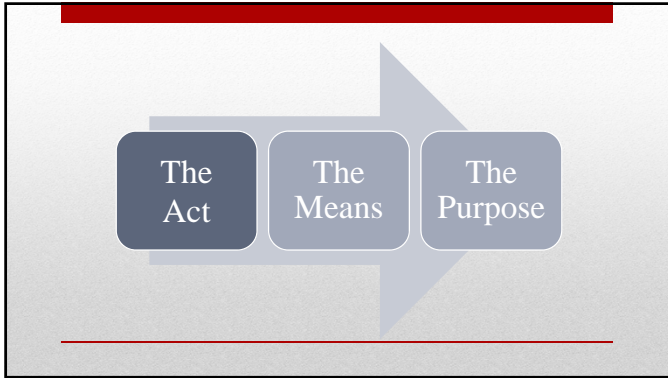
The purpose of this is to emphasize the section of the code’s applicability to offenses involving human trafficking. This legislation does not have any fiscal impact.

Legislative Overview

hu • man • traf • fick • ing

noun
 noun: human trafficking
the illegal movement of people, typically for the purposes of forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation.

**Issue Background:
 Defining Human Trafficking**



The Act: (what happens) the **recruitment**, **transportation**, and either **harboring** or transfer of persons trafficked.

The Act: What Happens

The Means: (how) the mechanism by which persons are trafficked is defined as the **threat or use of coercion** ---both physical and psychological to abduct or deceive a person into trafficking.

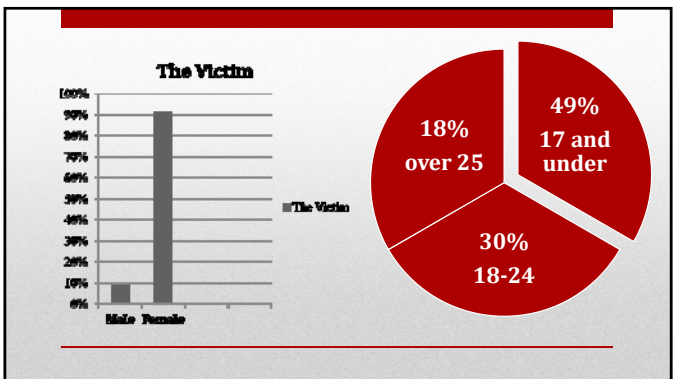
The Means: How

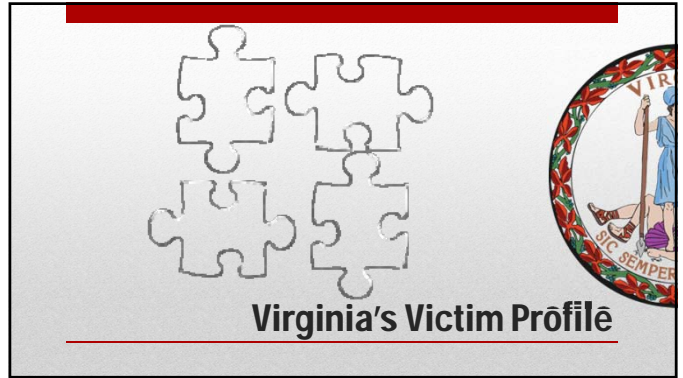
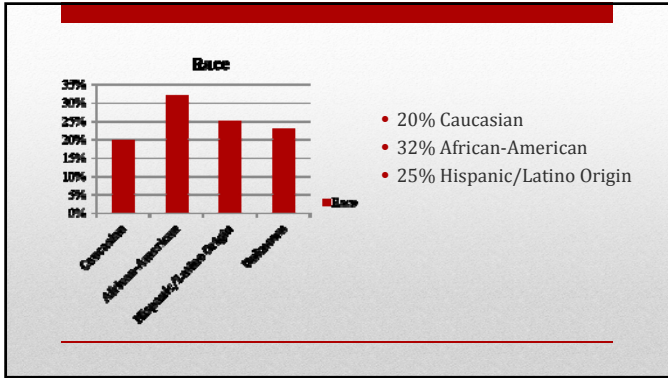
The Purpose: (why) human trafficking leads to its economic impact or costs. The purpose of human trafficking's exploitation is **usually sexual in nature** and driven by the desire for **money, sex, and labor**.

The Purpose: Why

- **Trafficking victims...**
 - **Minors (under age 18)** induced into commercial sex;
 - **Adults age 18 or over** involved in commercial sex via force, fraud, or coercion;
 - **Children and adults** forced to perform labor and/or services in conditions of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery, via force, fraud, or coercion.
- Victims are trafficked for a wide variety of purposes, such as **commercial sex**, agricultural work, or **housekeeping**.

National Victim Profile





Human Trafficking Services Needs Assessment (2012)
Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)

- Victim Needs
 - Legal
 - Housing
 - Employment
 - Anger Management
 - Mental Health
 - Food
 - Sexual Assault Services
 - Clothing

A Closer Look Into Virginia

Barriers/Challenge	% of Agencies	Barriers/Challenge	% of Agencies
Lack of adequate resources	58%	Lack of needed services	31%
Problems identifying victims of human trafficking	55%	Lack of in-house procedures	29%
Lack of adequate training	55%	Lack of knowledge about victims' rights	20%
Lack of adequate funding	45%	Coordination with local agencies	18%
Language concerns	35%	Coordination with federal agencies	16%
Safety concerns	35%	Coordination with state agencies	11%
Lack of formal rules/regulations	33%	Service providers who feel a lack of support and isolation	11%

State Rating Categories

- Sex Trafficking
- Labor Trafficking
- (a) Asset Forfeiture for Human Trafficking
- (b) Investigative Tools for Law Enforcement
- (a) Training on Human Trafficking for Law Enforcement
- (b) Human Trafficking Commission or Task Force
- Lower Burden of Proof for Sex Trafficking of Minors
- Posting a Human Trafficking Hotline
- Safe Harbor-Protecting Sexually Exploited Minors
- Victim Assistance
- Access to Civil Damages
- Vacating Convictions for Sex Trafficking Victims

2014 STATE RATINGS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING LAWS

Perfect Score: All categories passed: Delaware, New Jersey, Washington state

Most Improved Since 2013: Delaware (+8), New Hampshire (+4.5), Colorado (+4), Pennsylvania (+4), Utah (+4)

Total States: 51
Per Category: 51 51 42 37 31 20 46 25 22 38 36 18



In 2013, the Secretary of the Commonwealth Janet Kelly stated in a press release,

*“Traffickers often **prey on our most vulnerable** citizens – runaway youths, foster children, and kids without a strong sense of identity – in order to make a profit.”*

Virginia’s Vulnerable Populations

Foster Children in Virginia

- **25%** of children in foster care in Virginia age out of foster care with no identified permanent placement

Runaway Youth in Virginia

- **1,317** of the calls into the National Runaway youth hotline are from Virginia.
- **62%** of these calls are from youth between the ages of **16-21**

Ripe ground for victims

The Federation For American Immigration Reform website reports,

*“While anyone can become a victim of trafficking, **illegal aliens are highly vulnerable to being trafficked** due to a combination of factors, including **lack of legal status and protections, limited language skills and employment options, poverty and immigration-related debts, and social isolation.**”*

*They are often victimized by **traffickers from a similar ethnic or national background**, on whom they may be dependent for employment or support in the foreign country.”*

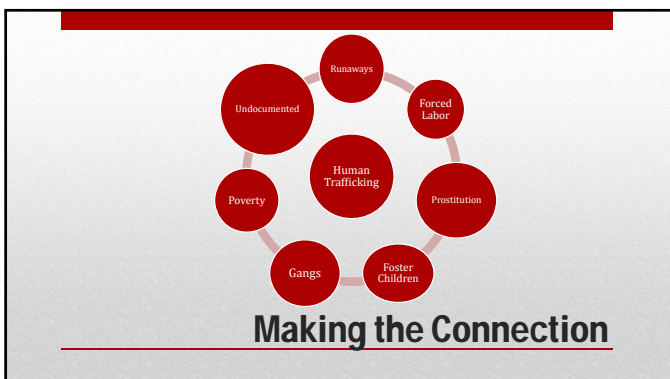
Poverty in Virginia (2012)

- Black Virginians have the highest poverty rate, 20.2%, compared to 10.8% among all Virginians.
- The Hispanic poverty rate (12.4%) is slightly above the state rate
- Poverty among non-Hispanic white Virginians (8.1%) is below the statewide level.

Group	Poverty Rate
Non-Hispanic/White	8.1%
African-American	20.2%
Hispanic/Latino	12.4%

Undocumented Immigrants in Virginia

- Illegal immigrants accounted for 2.7% (210,000) of the population in 2010 and 3.9% (160,000) of the labor force in Virginia



Lack of Data



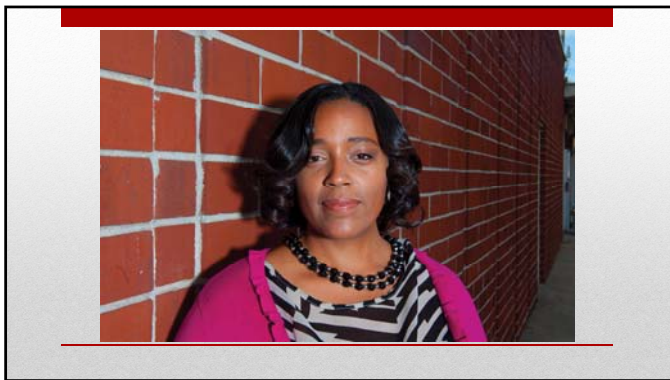
Recommendations

- **Advocacy:**
 - Outreach
- **Resources:**
 - Safe Havens and Training
- **Legislative Action:**
 - Legislation
 - Executive Order => Task Force




- Victim Assistance
- Victim Profile
- Correlations
 - Prostitution
 - Gangs
 - Undocumented Persons

Research/Data Collection



*"Fighting **slavery** doesn't cost a lot of money. The costs of allowing it to exist in our nation and abroad are much higher. It robs us of the thing we value most, our **freedom**."*

-Jada Pinkett Smith



Q & A

Human Trafficking...
Because *every* life matters.




Team 4
A Racial Impact Analysis of HB 994

Staci Boone, Traci DeShazor, Selonia Miles, Katina Williams