

# Safe Harbor

For Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation



**PCAR supports Safe Harbor legislation (SB 851), sponsored by Senator Stewart Greenleaf.**

This bill would establish protections for children who are trafficked in Pennsylvania.

## Action requested:

PCAR urges Pennsylvanians to contact their senators and urge them to help protect child victims of sexual exploitation and support SB 851.

## Bill summary:

Safe Harbor would amend Pennsylvania's existing human trafficking statute in four critical ways:

- Protect, rather than prosecute child victims of sexual exploitation
- Assist child protective services agencies in developing specialized services for victims
- Require law enforcement to attend trainings on identifying, interviewing, and assisting child victims of sexual exploitation
- Establish a fund for victim services and public awareness, through fines of convicted traffickers

## Impact on sexual assault victims:

Currently in Pennsylvania, minor victims of human trafficking can still be penalized and prosecuted—as if they are criminals rather than victims. Children who are trafficked in Pennsylvania often flee sexual abuse at home, only to be sexually exploited and assaulted on the streets<sup>1</sup>. These children are in survival mode—forced to commit crimes or barter sex for shelter, food, health care, and other basic needs<sup>2</sup>. Traffickers use violence, intimidation, threats, and coercion against child victims, telling them no one will believe them or that they will get in trouble if they try to get help. Prosecuting these children reinforces traffickers' harmful messages and further isolates victims, cutting them off from the very systems that should protect them. Safe Harbor legislation would establish critical mechanisms in the Commonwealth to combat the sexual trafficking of children and to protect and help its victims.

## Questions?

For more information, contact Donna Greco, Policy Director at the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape: 717-728-9740, x114 or [dgreco@pcar.org](mailto:dgreco@pcar.org).

## ABOUT PCAR

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) works to eliminate all forms of sexual violence and to advocate for the rights and needs of victims of sexual assault. PCAR works with a network of 50 rape crisis centers that serve all of the Commonwealth's 67 counties. Learn more at [www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org).

<sup>1</sup> Joint State Government Commission. (2016). *Homelessness in Pennsylvania: Causes, impacts, and solutions, a Task Force and Advisory Committee Report.* <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*