LB 518: Support for Trafficking Survivors Act

Every month, 900 individuals are advertised for sex, often multiple times, in Nebraska.

Every month in Nebraska, 900 individuals on average are advertised for sex, with the majority of those individuals showing signs of being trafficked.¹

The Legislature has made great strides in modernizing our laws to recognize trafficking survivors as victims, but our state must make services available to protect and support these victims.

Substantial harm results from the commercial sexual exploitation of individuals, including physical violence, negative physical and mental health consequences, rape and suicide.

- Traffickers maintain control of their victims through a variety of violent tactics. As a result of this violence, **99% of sex trafficking survivors/victims** report negative **physical health consequences**, and **98%** report negative **mental health consequences**.³
- **42% of survivors/victims attempt suicide** and more than **80% are raped** and during their trafficking.¹

A recent survey illustrates the need for additional investments in supportive services and law enforcement resources:⁵

- More than **80% of service providers** responded that they do not believe **statewide resources** are meeting the needs for residential/shelter services, mental health services and substance abuse recovery services for victims.
- **72% of service providers** responded that they do not believe their **capacity and resources** are adequately meeting the needs of victims for the services they currently provide.
- **65% of law enforcement officers** responded they did not have adequate numbers of staff to respond to trafficking cases. **45% of law enforcement officers** responded they did not believe there are adequate resources to refer sex trafficking victims to for services.

Survivors Speak

"(The community needs) a place where they could feel safe... they don't have to fear about their trafficker or their pimp coming after them... they could have basic needs met without any obligations, but clothes, especially food, warm bed...Is there a safe house for that? There is a help line but sometimes the phone isn't the thing that you need. Sometimes it's knowing the place that you could go to."²

"Counseling is... really big, especially if... they've gone through it and they're survivors. Even after they've been taken out of the situation, you still need the aftercare like counseling and support."²

LB 518: The Support for Trafficking Survivors Act is sponsored by Senator Lou Ann Linehan. For additional information, contact Tiffany Seibert-Joekel at TJoekel@OmahaWomensFund.org or 402-827-9280.
This session, the Women’s Fund will support legislation that will take the next step for our state in supporting survivors of sex trafficking.

The Support for Trafficking Survivors Act (LB 518) will support the safety, well-being, and economic stability of those who have been commercially sexually exploited. Often, trafficking victims are forced back into commercial sex and, subsequently, end up becoming deeply entrenched in the criminal justice system – incarcerated for their own safety and protection.

What does the Support for Trafficking Survivors Act (LB 518) do?

- **Creates Support for Trafficking Survivors Advisory Board** to develop, oversee and coordinate a statewide, multi-agency trafficking response, primarily through the creation of a state plan. Membership includes trafficking survivors, service providers, and representatives of law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

- **Creates the Office of Support for Trafficking Survivors** within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to coordinate and implement the state plan developed by the advisory board, building a “no wrong door” response for victims identified through child welfare, juvenile justice and criminal justice systems.

- **Creates the Support for Trafficking Survivors Fund** to implement competitive grants for services for trafficking victims across the state.

- **Creates a program to reimburse state and local law enforcement** for costs associated with trafficking investigations, operations, or prosecutions.

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4. Ibid.

5. A survey was prepared by the Women’s Fund of Omaha and disseminated to law enforcement officers and service providers in December 2018. It received 71 responses from law enforcement officers and 102 responses from service providers.