



VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY  
CHARLES WIDGER SCHOOL OF LAW

THE INSTITUTE TO ADDRESS  
COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

# Senate Bill 554: "Safe Harbor" Victim-Centered Criminal Justice Reform

SB 554 Safe Harbor legislation proposes amendments to Pennsylvania's human trafficking statute to ensure that child victims of human trafficking get the support they need.

**"To effectively combat sex trafficking, we need to alter our strategy. We need to update our laws. We cannot continue to perpetuate victim trauma. We must convey intelligence of the crime and compassion for the child, and stay focused on who the real criminals are in these situations."**

**- Shea Rhodes, CSE Institute Executive Director**

## 1 Protect and Not Prosecute Child Victims

SB 554 Safe Harbor requires that minors (anyone under 18-years-old) be granted immunity from prosecution for the crimes of (1) prostitution and (2) obstruction of the highway, which is often charged in place of prostitution. Additionally, the bill provides for alternatives to charging child victims of human trafficking with prostitution-related offenses if committed as a result of their victimization, including: (1) criminal trespass, (2) false identification to law enforcement, (3) disorderly conduct, (4) loitering and prowling at night, and (5) simple possession of a controlled substance.

## 2 Empower State Agencies to Support Child Victims

SB 554 Safe Harbor requires the Department of Human Services, in conjunction with county agencies, to develop and provide specialized services for sexually exploited children, including: housing, education, employment, therapy, mental health services, substance dependency treatment, medical care, clothing, case management services, tattoo removal, or any other needs the victims may have.

## 3 Train Police to Identify and Help Child Victims

SB 554 Safe Harbor requires the Pennsylvania State Police to provide statewide training to appropriate law enforcement officers focusing on: (1) methods to identify a sexually exploited child, (2) methods to interview and engage with a sexually exploited child, and (3) methods to assist victims in accessing specialized programs and services.

## 4 Establish a Fund for Victim Services and Awareness

SB 554 Safe Harbor also establishes a fund created through convicted traffickers' and sex buyers' fines. The fund will be used to enhance victim services and increase public awareness about human trafficking.



The Villanova Law Institute to Address  
Commercial Sexual Exploitation

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