

# SENATE BILL 550

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CF HB 508

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By: **Senator Sydnor**

Introduced and read first time: January 25, 2024

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Children – Labor Trafficking**

3 FOR the purpose of adding labor trafficking by a child’s parent or guardian to the list of  
4 conditions under which a local department of social services is authorized to ask the  
5 juvenile court in a child in need of assistance proceeding to find that reasonable  
6 efforts to reunify a child with the child’s parent or guardian are not required;  
7 expanding provisions of law relating to the Safe Harbor Regional Navigator Grant  
8 Program to apply to child victims of labor trafficking; and generally relating to labor  
9 trafficking of children.

10 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
11 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings  
12 Section 3–801 and 3–812  
13 Annotated Code of Maryland  
14 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

15 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
16 Article – Family Law  
17 Section 5–701(a) and 5–704.4(c)  
18 Annotated Code of Maryland  
19 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

20 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
21 Article – Family Law  
22 Section 5–701(m), 5–704.3, and 5–704.4(b), (d), (e), and (g)  
23 Annotated Code of Maryland  
24 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

25 BY adding to  
26 Article – Family Law  
27 Section 5–701(m)

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 Annotated Code of Maryland  
2 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

3 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
4 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

5 **Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings**

6 3–801.

7 (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

8 (b) “Abuse” means:

9 (1) Sexual abuse of a child, whether a physical injury is sustained or not;  
10 or

11 (2) Physical or mental injury of a child under circumstances that indicate  
12 that the child’s health or welfare is harmed or is at substantial risk of being harmed by:

13 (i) A parent or other individual who has permanent or temporary  
14 care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child; or

15 (ii) A household or family member.

16 (c) “Adjudicatory hearing” means a hearing under this subtitle to determine  
17 whether the allegations in the petition, other than the allegation that the child requires the  
18 court’s intervention, are true.

19 (d) “Adult” means an individual who is at least 18 years old.

20 (e) “Child” means an individual under the age of 18 years.

21 (f) “Child in need of assistance” means a child who requires court intervention  
22 because:

23 (1) The child has been abused, has been neglected, has a developmental  
24 disability, or has a mental disorder; and

25 (2) The child’s parents, guardian, or custodian are unable or unwilling to  
26 give proper care and attention to the child and the child’s needs.

27 (g) “CINA” means a child in need of assistance.

28 (h) “Commit” means to transfer custody.

29 (i) “Court” means the circuit court for a county sitting as the juvenile court.

1 (j) “Custodian” means a person or governmental agency to whom custody of a  
2 child has been given by order of court, including a court other than the juvenile court.

3 (k) “Custody” means the right and obligation, unless otherwise determined by the  
4 court, to provide ordinary care for a child and determine placement.

5 (l) “Developmental disability” means a severe chronic disability of an individual  
6 that:

7 (1) Is attributable to a physical or mental impairment, other than the sole  
8 diagnosis of mental illness, or to a combination of mental and physical impairments;

9 (2) Is likely to continue indefinitely;

10 (3) Results in an inability to live independently without external support  
11 or continuing and regular assistance; and

12 (4) Reflects the need for a combination and sequence of special,  
13 interdisciplinary, or generic care, treatment, or other services that are individually planned  
14 and coordinated for the individual.

15 (m) “Disposition hearing” means a hearing under this subtitle to determine:

16 (1) Whether a child is in need of assistance; and

17 (2) If so, the nature of the court’s intervention to protect the child’s health,  
18 safety, and well-being.

19 (n) “Guardian” means a person to whom guardianship of a child has been given  
20 by order of court, including a court other than the juvenile court.

21 (o) “Guardianship” means an award by a court, including a court other than the  
22 juvenile court, of the authority to make ordinary and emergency decisions as to the child’s  
23 care, welfare, education, physical and mental health, and the right to pursue support.

24 (p) **“LABOR TRAFFICKING” MEANS KNOWINGLY:**

25 **(1) TAKING, PLACING, HARBORING, PERSUADING, INDUCING, OR**  
26 **ENTICING A CHILD BY FORCE, FRAUD, OR COERCION TO PROVIDE SERVICES OR**  
27 **LABOR; OR**

28 **(2) RECEIVING A BENEFIT OR THING OF VALUE FROM THE PROVISION**  
29 **OF SERVICES OR LABOR BY A CHILD THAT WAS INDUCED BY FORCE, FRAUD, OR**  
30 **COERCION.**

1           **(Q)** “Local department” means:

2                   (1)     The local department of social services for the county in which the court  
3 is located; or

4                   (2)     In Montgomery County, the county department of health and human  
5 services.

6           **[(q)] (R)**   (1)     “Mental disorder” means a behavioral or emotional illness that  
7 results from a psychiatric or neurological disorder.

8                   (2)     “Mental disorder” includes a mental illness that so substantially  
9 impairs the mental or emotional functioning of an individual as to make care or treatment  
10 necessary or advisable for the welfare of the individual or for the safety of the person or  
11 property of another.

12                  (3)     “Mental disorder” does not include mental retardation.

13           **[(r)] (S)**   “Mental injury” means the observable, identifiable, and substantial  
14 impairment of a child’s mental or psychological ability to function.

15           **[(s)] (T)**   (1)     “Neglect” means the leaving of a child unattended or other failure  
16 to give proper care and attention to a child by any parent or individual who has permanent  
17 or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child under  
18 circumstances that indicate:

19                   (i)     That the child’s health or welfare is harmed or placed at  
20 substantial risk of harm; or

21                   (ii)    That the child has suffered mental injury or been placed at  
22 substantial risk of mental injury.

23                  (2)     “Neglect” does not include the use of cannabis by any parent or  
24 individual who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for  
25 supervision of the child unless, as a result of the use of cannabis:

26                   (i)     The child’s health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial  
27 risk of harm; or

28                   (ii)    The child has suffered mental injury or been placed at  
29 substantial risk of mental injury.

30           **[(t)] (U)**   “Parent” means a natural or adoptive parent whose parental rights  
31 have not been terminated.

32           **[(u)] (V)**   (1)     “Party” means:

- 1 (i) A child who is the subject of a petition;
- 2 (ii) The child's parent, guardian, or custodian;
- 3 (iii) The petitioner; or
- 4 (iv) An adult who is charged under § 3–828 of this subtitle.

5 (2) “Party” does not include a foster parent.

6 **[(v)] (w)** “Qualified residential treatment program” means a program within a  
7 licensed child care institution that provides continuous, 24-hour care and supportive  
8 services to children in a residential, nonfamily home setting that:

9 (1) Has a trauma-informed treatment model that is designed to address  
10 the clinical and other needs of children with serious emotional or behavioral disorders or  
11 disturbances;

12 (2) Is able to implement the specific treatment recommended in an  
13 assessment completed by a qualified individual;

14 (3) Has registered or licensed nursing staff and other licensed clinical staff  
15 who are:

16 (i) On site according to the treatment model and during business  
17 hours; and

18 (ii) Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;

19 (4) Appropriately facilitates outreach to family members and integrates  
20 the family members into the treatment of the children;

21 (5) Is able to provide discharge planning that provides family-based  
22 aftercare support for at least 6 months following discharge;

23 (6) Is licensed in accordance with § 471(a)(10) of the Social Security Act;  
24 and

25 (7) Is accredited by an approved independent nonprofit organization.

26 **[(w)] (x)** “Reasonable efforts” means efforts that are reasonably likely to achieve  
27 the objectives set forth in § 3–816.1(b)(1) and (2) of this subtitle.

28 **[(x)] (y)** “Relative” means an individual who is:

29 (1) Related to the child by blood or marriage within five degrees of

1 consanguinity or affinity under the civil law; and

2 (2) (i) At least 21 years old; or

3 (ii) 1. At least 18 years old; and

4 2. Lives with a spouse who is at least 21 years old.

5 **[(y)] (Z)** “Sex trafficking” means the recruitment, harboring, transportation,  
6 provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a child for the purpose of a commercial sex  
7 act.

8 **[(z)] (AA)** “Sexual abuse” means an act that involves:

9 (1) Sexual molestation or exploitation of a child by:

10 (i) A parent or other individual who has permanent or temporary  
11 care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child; or

12 (ii) A household or family member; or

13 (2) Sex trafficking of a child by any individual.

14 **[(aa)] (BB)** “Sexual molestation or exploitation” includes:

15 (1) Allowing or encouraging a child to engage in:

16 (i) Obscene photography, films, poses, or similar activity;

17 (ii) Pornographic photography, films, poses, or similar activity; or

18 (iii) Prostitution;

19 (2) Incest;

20 (3) Rape;

21 (4) Sexual offense in any degree; and

22 (5) Any other sexual conduct that is a crime.

23 **[(bb)] (CC)** “Shelter care” means a temporary placement of a child outside of the  
24 home at any time before disposition.

25 **[(cc)] (DD)** “Shelter care hearing” means a hearing held before disposition to  
26 determine whether the temporary placement of the child outside of the home is warranted.

1           [(dd)] **(EE)** “TPR proceeding” means a proceeding to terminate parental rights.

2           [(ee)] **(FF)** “Voluntary placement” means a placement in accordance with §  
3 5–525(b)(1)(i) or (iii) or (3) of the Family Law Article.

4           [(ff)] **(GG)** “Voluntary placement hearing” means a hearing to obtain a judicial  
5 determination as to whether continuing a voluntary placement is in the best interests of  
6 the child.

7 3–812.

8           (a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated, unless  
9 the context of their use indicates otherwise.

10                   (2) “Abandon” means to leave a child without any provision for support and  
11 without any person who has accepted long–term responsibility to maintain care and have  
12 custody and control of the child when:

13                           (i) The whereabouts of the parent or guardian are unknown; and

14                           (ii) The local department has made reasonable efforts to locate the  
15 parent or guardian over a period of at least 6 months and has been unsuccessful.

16                   (3) “Crime of violence”:

17                           (i) Has the meaning stated in § 14–101 of the Criminal Law Article;  
18 or

19                           (ii) As to a crime committed in another state, means a crime that, if  
20 committed in this State, would be a crime of violence as defined in § 14–101 of the Criminal  
21 Law Article.

22                   (4) “Torture” means to cause intense pain to body or mind for purposes of  
23 punishment or extraction of information or for sadistic purposes.

24           (b) In a petition under this subtitle, a local department may ask the court to find  
25 that reasonable efforts to reunify a child with the child’s parent or guardian are not  
26 required if the local department concludes that a parent or guardian:

27                   (1) Has subjected the child to any of the following aggravated  
28 circumstances:

29                           (i) The parent or guardian has engaged in or facilitated:

30                                   1. Chronic or severe physical abuse of the child, a sibling of  
31 the child, or another child in the household;

1                                   2.     Chronic and life–threatening neglect of the child, a sibling  
2 of the child, or another child in the household;

3                                   3.     Sexual abuse **OR LABOR TRAFFICKING** of the child, a  
4 sibling of the child, or another child in the household; or

5                                   4.     Torture of the child, a sibling of the child, or another child  
6 in the household;

7                                   (ii)    The parent or guardian knowingly failed to take appropriate  
8 steps to protect the child after a person in the household [inflicted]:

9                                   1.     **INFLICTED** sexual abuse, severe physical abuse,  
10 life–threatening neglect, or torture on the child or another child in the household; **OR**

11                                  2.     **ENGAGED IN OR FACILITATED LABOR TRAFFICKING**  
12 **OF THE CHILD;**

13                                  (iii)   The child, a sibling of the child, or another child in the household  
14 has suffered severe physical abuse or death resulting from abuse by the parent or guardian  
15 or another adult in the household and all persons who could have inflicted the abuse or  
16 caused the death remain in the household; or

17                                  (iv)    The parent or guardian has abandoned the child;

18                   (2)    Has been convicted, in any state or any court of the United States, of:

19                                  (i)     A crime of violence against:

20                                   1.     A minor offspring of the parent or guardian;

21                                   2.     The child; or

22                                   3.     Another parent or guardian of the child; or

23                                  (ii)    Aiding or abetting, conspiring, or soliciting to commit a crime  
24 described in item (i) of this item; or

25                   (3)    Has involuntarily lost parental rights of a sibling of the child.

26                   (c)    If the local department determines after the initial petition is filed that any of  
27 the circumstances specified in subsection (b) of this section exists, the local department  
28 may immediately request the court to find that reasonable efforts to reunify the child with  
29 the child’s parent or guardian are not required.

30                   (d)    If the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that any of the



1 circumstances specified in subsection (b) of this section exists, the court shall waive the  
2 requirement that reasonable efforts be made to reunify the child with the child's parent or  
3 guardian.

4 (e) If the court finds that reasonable efforts are not required, the local department  
5 shall:

6 (1) Request that a permanency planning hearing be held in accordance  
7 with § 3-823 of this subtitle within 30 days after the court makes the finding; and

8 (2) Make reasonable efforts to place the child in a timely manner in  
9 accordance with the permanency plan and complete the steps necessary to finalize the  
10 permanent placement of the child.

11 (f) If a parent consents to guardianship or adoption in accordance with § 5-320  
12 or § 5-338 of the Family Law Article, loss of parental rights shall be considered voluntary.

### 13 Article – Family Law

14 5-701.

15 (a) Except as otherwise provided in § 5-705.1 of this subtitle, in this subtitle the  
16 following words have the meanings indicated.

17 [(m)] (L) “Indicated” means a finding that there is credible evidence, which has  
18 not been satisfactorily refuted, that abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse did occur.

19 (M) “LABOR TRAFFICKING” MEANS KNOWINGLY:

20 (1) TAKING, PLACING, HARBORING, PERSUADING, INDUCING, OR  
21 ENTICING A CHILD BY FORCE, FRAUD, OR COERCION TO PROVIDE SERVICES OR  
22 LABOR; OR

23 (2) RECEIVING A BENEFIT OR THING OF VALUE FROM THE PROVISION  
24 OF SERVICES OR LABOR BY A CHILD THAT WAS INDUCED BY FORCE, FRAUD, OR  
25 COERCION.

26 5-704.3.

27 A local department that receives a report of suspected abuse or neglect under this  
28 subtitle involving a child who is a suspected victim of sex trafficking **OR LABOR**  
29 **TRAFFICKING** shall refer the child to any appropriate regional navigator, as defined in §  
30 5-704.4 of this subtitle, for the jurisdiction where the trafficking occurred or where the  
31 child is a resident for services.

32 5-704.4.

- 1 (b) (1) There is a Safe Harbor Regional Navigator Grant Program.
- 2 (2) The purpose of the program is to support services for youth victims of  
3 sex trafficking **AND LABOR TRAFFICKING** by:
- 4 (i) creating and sustaining projects to provide services for youth  
5 victims of sex trafficking that are victim-centered and trauma-informed;
- 6 (ii) facilitating and coordinating among local departments, the  
7 Department of Juvenile Services, sexual assault crisis programs, child advocacy programs,  
8 local offices of the Office of the Public Defender, and other state and local agencies  
9 responding to youth victims of sex trafficking **AND LABOR TRAFFICKING**;
- 10 (iii) ensuring that youth victims of sex trafficking **AND LABOR**  
11 **TRAFFICKING** have access to services described under subsection (e) of this section;
- 12 (iv) increasing the State's capacity to respond to youth sex trafficking  
13 **AND LABOR TRAFFICKING**; and
- 14 (v) training providers to appropriately identify and serve youth  
15 victims of sex trafficking **AND LABOR TRAFFICKING**.
- 16 (c) A grantee under the program may include:
- 17 (1) a child advocacy center;
- 18 (2) a sexual assault crisis program; or
- 19 (3) a qualified community-based victim services provider.
- 20 (d) Grants under this section shall be awarded:
- 21 (1) to ensure that emergency and long-term services are available for  
22 youth victims of sex trafficking **AND LABOR TRAFFICKING** in every jurisdiction in the  
23 State by January 1, 2022; and
- 24 (2) to provide services in one jurisdiction or in more than one similar  
25 jurisdiction in the same region.
- 26 (e) Services coordinated and provided by a grantee under this section shall  
27 include:
- 28 (1) safety planning;
- 29 (2) emergency response;

- 1 (3) basic living needs, [not] including housing;
- 2 (4) trauma counseling and mental health services;
- 3 (5) drug and alcohol abuse treatment;
- 4 (6) legal services;
- 5 (7) victim advocacy;
- 6 (8) case management; and
- 7 (9) designation of regional navigators.

8 (g) (1) Every 2 years, beginning December 1, 2019, the Executive Director  
9 shall submit an independent evaluation report with qualitative and quantitative data to  
10 the Governor and, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, the  
11 General Assembly regarding whether services coordinated and provided by grantees under  
12 this section are available, adequate, and successfully serving children and youth who are  
13 victims of sex trafficking **AND LABOR TRAFFICKING**.

14 (2) Beginning December 1, 2019, the Department of Human Services shall  
15 annually report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government  
16 Article, the General Assembly on:

17 (i) the number of reports of child sex trafficking **AND LABOR**  
18 **TRAFFICKING** made in the State in the preceding year;

19 (ii) the outcome or disposition of reports of child sex trafficking **AND**  
20 **LABOR TRAFFICKING** made in the State in the preceding year; and

21 (iii) the number of referrals made to regional navigators under this  
22 section in the preceding year.

23 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
24 October 1, 2024.