



# 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.<sup>1</sup>**

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**.<sup>3</sup>
- **42% of survivors/victims attempt suicide** and more than **80% are raped** during their trafficking.<sup>4</sup>

## Survivors Speak

"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."<sup>2</sup>

## 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."<sup>2</sup>

**A recent survey illustrates the need for additional investments in supportive services and law enforcement resources:<sup>5</sup>**

- 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

"Most of the females out there are under age or they are of age and they're forced to do it. They're hooked on drugs and that's how they can't get out is because they're on drugs and they get that money to keep the drugs in their system...a man that's controlling them and abusing them."<sup>2</sup>

**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 promote 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 a competitive grant program** 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.

## Survivors Speak

"Things like teaching life skills. Because a lot of us girls coming out, we don't have the life skills.

Budgeting—how do you write a budget . . . when all you've done is been a prostitute? You don't know how . . . maybe get a job . . .

All of those things . . . are stripped from you because you're no longer yourself.

So getting all of those things back, your identity, getting those things back so that you can go out and get a job or apply for jobs."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Women's Fund of Omaha, "Nebraska Commercial Sex Market," <https://www.omahawomensfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Nebraskas-Commercial-Sex-Market-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Rajaram, S.S. & Tidball, S. (2016). Nebraska Survivor's Speak—A Qualitative Research Study. Report submitted to the Women's Fund of Omaha. <https://www.omahawomensfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Nothing-About-Us-Without-Us-1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Lederer, Laura, and Christopher Wetzel. "The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities." *Annals of Health Law*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2014, p. 61-91.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> 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.