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Advocacy Toolkit for Florida HB 259/SB 982

Last updated 2019 February 25 | by Christine Hanavan, MSW & Jill McCracken, PhD

SWOP Behind Bars opposes Florida House Bill 259 (**HB 259**) and its counterpart Senate Bill 982 (**SB 982**) because it ties human trafficking education to abstinence-only education. The House version is sponsored by Representatives Williams (District 92) and Plasencia (District 50), and the Senate version is sponsored by Senator Thurston (District 33).

As an alternative, we **support HB 703** and **SB 926**. We advocate human trafficking education be included by amending HB 703/SB 926 rather than passing HB 259/SB 982.

Bill websites:

- HB 259: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2019/00259>
- SB 982: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2019/982>

Language of FL HB 259/SB 982

Merged summary: "Human Trafficking Education in Schools; Revising the required health education in public schools to include information regarding the dangers and signs of human trafficking; authorizes student to opt out of specified portion of health education; requiring the Department of Legal Affairs to develop human trafficking awareness campaigns; requiring the department to develop and operate a hotline to receive reports of potential human trafficking activity & report specified reports to law enforcement for certain purposes, etc."

Our Bill Analysis

Human Trafficking Education in Schools

These bills would add education related to human trafficking, such as terms used by traffickers and warning signs, to the existing abstinence-only education statute [F.S. 1003.42\(2\)\(n\)](#): "an awareness of the benefits of sexual abstinence as the expected standard and the consequences of teenage pregnancy."

Awareness Campaigns

These bills would expand awareness campaigns through the Department of Legal Affairs "among children and other vulnerable populations," such as approaches used by traffickers and warning signs.

Toll-Free Hotline

These bills would add a new toll-free hotline for reporting potential human trafficking. Credible reports would be forwarded to "appropriate law enforcement agencies."

Our Points

Expanding adolescent health education to include human trafficking is something we absolutely support. However, we cannot support how these bills would achieve it.

- These bills use human trafficking education in public schools to continue to mandate and support abstinence-only education. Florida's students would benefit from more education about human trafficking, and they have a right to comprehensive and evidence-based sexual and health education, such as what would be provided in **SB 926** and **HB 703**. Human trafficking education should not be bundled with abstinence-only requirements.
- Florida already has some existing awareness campaigns about human trafficking aimed at students through the Department of Education, such as required posters on school transportation. The Department of Education should be responsible for any such campaigns, *not* the Department of Legal Affairs.
- Creating a new hotline may not be warranted based on the existing call volume and reports. Florida already has a hotline for reporting suspected child abuse and exploitation: 1-800-96-ABUSE, the Florida Abuse Hotline operated by DCF. They receive over 2000 reports annually for suspected human trafficking of children. Suspected human trafficking of adults is reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline operated by the Polaris Project. According to their most recent numbers, they had approximately 600 reports from Florida in 2017 (child or adult). For comparison, FCADV¹ received 122,999 hotline calls in FY 2015-2016² via its statewide hotline and regional centers. FCASV³ rape crisis hotlines also receive many thousands of calls annually. Creating a new hotline may streamline the process, but it would also duplicate services instead of directing those resources to improving existing services.
- Educational programs about trafficking in the sex industry must ensure that distinctions are made between adult consensual sex work and sex trafficking.
- Educational programs about human trafficking must include sex workers, human trafficking victims and survivors, and sex workers who are victims/survivors in all stages of development.

¹ Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

² FCADV's fiscal year runs July 1 - June 30.

³ Florida Council Against Sexual Violence