

March 23, 2023

Senator Wiklund
Chair, HHS
Minnesota Senate
St. Paul, MN

Dear Chair Wiklund,

As the President and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, I write to express our support of SF1839, which will make significant and needed investment to prevent sexual exploitation of youth who are most at risk of being trafficked and support the services and housing needed by survivors of sex trafficking. Our commitment to ending abuse and exploitation of women, girls, and gender-expansive youth extends from our historic investments in MN Girls Are Not For Sale and our work with partners to enact the Safe Harbor Law in Minnesota.

For 40 years, the Women's Foundation has invested more than \$45 million in communities across the state, and advanced policy to create a state where women, girls, and their families thrive. With the Center on Women, Gender, & Public Policy at the Humphrey School, we produce the state's leading research on the well-being of women and girls every two years. That data tells us that trafficking is still all too common, and it impacts communities across the state. When we disaggregate the data, communities disproportionately affected by sexual exploitation include intersections of race, gender, place, and additional identities like LGBTQ+ and disabilities.


Safe Harbor is the foundation of preventing and addressing sex trafficking, with navigators throughout the state who provide referrals, connection, and access to community-based resources that support the women and girls who are the primary targets and survivors of this terrible crime. We need to build upon this foundation with vital resources for the organizations who provide direct outreach, including emotional, financial, and family reunification support to survivors.

To meet demand, we need investments in emergency shelter and housing for those who are at risk and those who have survived sex trafficking and exploitation. Creating safe, supportive, and accessible housing for youth without stable homes or who could become homeless will limit traffickers' ability to use one of their most effective tools - the promise of shelter - to lure youth into trafficking and harm. For survivors, we need to create opportunities for a better future, with supportive services including access to trauma-informed healing, education and training, and safe housing.

The need for additional services is statewide. Trafficking is not limited by zip code in Minnesota, which is why the Safe Harbor Law established a network of navigators and shelters across the state. Still, there are far too many survivors of trafficking who need access to the places and services where they can heal. We need to take steps to provide necessary resources.

Sexual exploitation has no place in Minnesota. By providing safe, accessible, and culturally responsive housing and support, we can prevent this abuse and treat survivors with the healing and justice they deserve. We urge you to pass SF1839 to make Minnesota a place where women, girls, and gender-expansive people from all zip codes and backgrounds can thrive.

Thank you,



Gloria Perez
CEO & President
Women's Foundation of Minnesota