SENATE BILL SB-38

Introduced by Senator Shannon Grove (R-12)

An act relating to Human Trafficking Prevention and Victim Protection .

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB-38, Shannon Grove (R-12). Human Trafficking Prevention and Victim Protection .

Existing California law establishes criminal penalties for human trafficking, including increased penalties for trafficking minors.

This bill would establish a statewide human trafficking prevention and survivor protection initiative administered by the California Department of Justice. The initiative would focus on preventing trafficking, strengthening victim identification, improving protections for survivors, and increasing coordination between state and local agencies.

This bill would require the Department of Justice to establish public education programs addressing human trafficking, online exploitation, grooming, recruitment tactics, and warning signs of trafficking. The program would prioritize schools, rural communities, underserved populations, and areas with limited access to victim services.

This bill would require participating law enforcement agencies to receive training in trauma-informed approaches to identifying and assisting trafficking victims. It would also establish procedures for connecting identified victims with emergency housing, medical and mental health services, legal assistance, and long-term survivor support.

This bill would establish grants for qualified nonprofit organizations and local agencies providing direct services to trafficking survivors, with priority given to underserved and rural communities.

This bill would also strengthen coordination between law enforcement, schools, healthcare providers, social services, and community organizations to improve early identification, reporting, and prevention of human trafficking.

Vote: Majority. **Appropriations/fiscal:** yes. **Local program:** yes.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1.
This act shall be known as and may be cited as the Human Trafficking Prevention and Survivor Protection Act.

SECTION 2.
The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Human trafficking is a serious crime that exploits individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for financial or personal gain.
(b) Children, homeless individuals, individuals experiencing poverty, and other vulnerable populations are at increased risk of exploitation and trafficking.

(c) Human traffickers increasingly use social media, online platforms, false employment opportunities, and personal relationships to recruit and exploit victims.
(d) Rural and underserved communities may face additional barriers to identifying trafficking and accessing emergency services due to limited resources and geographic isolation.
(e) Victims of human trafficking may experience physical abuse, psychological trauma, financial exploitation, and threats against themselves or their families.
(f) Victims should not be treated as criminals for unlawful activities directly resulting from their exploitation, to the extent provided by state law.
(g) Effective prevention requires public education, early identification, accountability for traffickers, and accessible services for victims and survivors.
(h) Survivors should have access to services without being required to participate in criminal investigations or prosecutions as a condition of receiving assistance, except where otherwise required by law.

SECTION 3.
The California Department of Justice shall establish a statewide human trafficking prevention and education program.

The program shall include:
(a) Public education regarding the warning signs of human trafficking, including grooming, coercion, manipulation, and exploitation.
(b) Educational materials addressing online recruitment, social media exploitation, fraudulent employment opportunities, and other methods used by traffickers.
(c) Age-appropriate human trafficking prevention education for participating public schools, with an emphasis on online safety, recognizing suspicious recruitment behavior, and seeking assistance.
(d) Community outreach programs targeting rural communities, underserved populations, and areas with limited access to prevention resources.
(e) Educational materials available in multiple languages to ensure accessibility for individuals with limited English proficiency.
(f) Information regarding how to safely report suspected trafficking and access available victim services.
(g) Partnerships with schools, healthcare providers, community organizations, and nonprofit organizations to increase public awareness and early identification.

SECTION 4.
(a) The Department of Justice shall develop standardized guidelines for law enforcement agencies to identify and respond to suspected human trafficking victims.
(b) Law enforcement agencies shall provide appropriate training to officers regarding:
1. Recognizing signs of human trafficking and exploitation.

2. Identifying victims who may be afraid to seek assistance or cooperate with authorities.
3. Recognizing the effects of trauma, coercion, and psychological manipulation.
4. Conducting interviews using trauma-informed practices.
5. Connecting victims with appropriate emergency and long-term support services.
(c) When a potential victim is identified, responding agencies shall make reasonable efforts to connect the individual with qualified victim advocates and appropriate service providers.
(d) Victims shall be treated with dignity and respect and shall not be threatened, intimidated, or discriminated against because of their trafficking experience.
(e) Victims shall receive information regarding available services regardless of their willingness or ability to participate in an investigation or prosecution, subject to applicable law.
(f) Agencies shall take reasonable steps to protect victim identities and confidential information, consistent with applicable state and federal law.

SECTION 5.
The Department of Justice shall establish a grant program to support qualified nonprofit organizations, local agencies, and community organizations providing direct services to human trafficking victims and survivors.

Eligible services shall include:
(a) Emergency and transitional housing for victims escaping trafficking situations.
(b) Medical care and mental health counseling, including trauma-informed treatment.
(c) Legal assistance, including help navigating protective orders, immigration-related legal services, and other legal matters.
(d) Victim advocacy and case management services.
(e) Educational assistance, job training, and employment placement programs to help survivors achieve financial independence.
(f) Transportation assistance for victims seeking shelter, medical treatment, court services, or other necessary resources.
(g) Specialized services for minors, including safe placement, educational support, and age-appropriate counseling.
(h) Long-term assistance for survivors transitioning into independent living.

SECTION 6.
(a) The Department of Justice shall coordinate with:
1. Local and state law enforcement agencies.
2. County district attorneys and social services agencies.
3. Public schools and educational institutions.

4. Healthcare providers and mental health organizations.
5. Qualified nonprofit organizations and survivor advocacy groups.
(b) The purpose of this coordination shall be to improve early identification, reporting, victim referrals, and access to services.
(c) Participating agencies shall establish referral procedures to ensure victims can be connected with appropriate service providers without unnecessary delays.
(d) The Department of Justice shall provide guidance to participating agencies regarding available resources and effective prevention strategies.
(e) The Department shall encourage collaboration with existing victim service programs to avoid unnecessary duplication of services.

SECTION 7.
(a) The Department of Justice shall monitor the effectiveness of programs funded under this act.
(b) A report shall be submitted to the Legislature evaluating:
1. The number of individuals reached through prevention and education programs.
2. The number of victims connected with emergency and long-term services.
3. The availability of services in rural and underserved communities.
4. The effectiveness of interagency coordination.
5. The use of grant funding and opportunities to improve program effectiveness.
(c) Reports shall protect confidential victim information and shall not contain personally identifying information.
(d) The Department shall use evaluation findings to identify gaps in services and recommend improvements to statewide prevention efforts.

SECTION 8.
The sum of $2 million shall be appropriated as a one-time allocation to implement this act, distributed as follows:

1. Statewide prevention and education: $400,000
2. Survivor services and nonprofit grants: $1,000,000
3. Law enforcement training and interagency coordination: $400,000
4. Oversight, data collection, and evaluation: $200,000

(a) Grant funding shall prioritize organizations serving rural and underserved communities.
(b) Funding for survivor services shall prioritize emergency housing, mental health counseling, legal assistance, transportation, and long-term recovery support.
(c) Administrative expenses shall be limited to amounts necessary to implement and oversee the program.
(d) The Department of Justice shall ensure that allocated funds are used for their intended purposes.

(e) The Department shall prioritize partnerships with existing nonprofit organizations and state programs to maximize the impact of available funding and avoid unnecessary administrative costs.

SECTION 10.
This act shall take effect January 1 following its enactment.