

## SAFE HARBOR FOR SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUTH 2021 – HF? / SF2188

### THE ISSUE

Children and youth in our state should never be bought and sold for sex but the reality is that it is happening within all communities across our state-in our cities and in our suburban, rural and tribal communities. According to the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) at least 5,000 youth between the ages of 15 and 19 have traded sex. (This is believed to be an underestimate as the MSS is only completed by students who are enrolled in school and doesn't include youth who weren't in school on the day of the survey or who are reluctant to answer this question due to shame and fear.)

- The average age that a youth begins to be sexually exploited is 13.
- Boys are exploited too-it is an issue that victimizes all genders not only girls. Many academic studies have shown that boys are exploited at equal rates to girls.
- Youth who are exploited experience much higher rates of sexual and physical violence including murder than youth who are not sexually exploited.
- Youth who have experienced sexual exploitation are more likely to have PTSD, depression, anxiety and other mental health issues as a result of the trauma they endured.

### 2020/2021 Oppressions Laid Bare

- Our children, youth and young families cannot “Just Stay Home” to stay healthy and safe
- Sexual Exploitation is a gender and racial justice issue. A study by the University of Minnesota found that “youth victims were predominately youth of color living in poverty...while sex buyers were men from all communities and socio economic backgrounds...” additional studies have found that 85% of sexually exploited youth identify as BIPOC with the majority being Black followed by Indigenous.
- Youth experiencing homelessness are also disproportionately LGBTQ+ - studies have consistently shown that at least one third of youth experiencing exploitation identify as LGBTQ+ compared to 3 to 5% of the general youth population.
- MN's paradox, the best outcomes for white youth-the worst in the nation for BIPOC youth. By investing in Safe Harbor you are supporting making a difference in the outcomes for BIPOC youth.
- Do better MN!

### THE REQUEST

**Additional \$4 million to the base of \$15.2 in Safe Harbor to expand support:**

- Preventing sexual exploitation is possible! If we expand our prevention and intervention services we can reduce and end sexual exploitation!
- \$3 million to support sustaining and expanding emergency shelter and housing for youth victims of sex trafficking. If a youth has a safe place to heal and can leave the life and become further strengthened and empowered to reach their goals.

- \$1 million to support the expansion of Safe Harbor Supportive Services to help increase access to critical services such as legal services, mental health therapy, substance abuse services and more.

## FACTS ABOUT SAFE HARBOR

- We've made progress in recent years, thanks to legislative and local action. Our biennial appropriation today is **\$15.2 million**. This is incredible progress and we thank you for your support-but we need more resources for these incredible youth.
- Safe Harbor keeps youth safe and gets them critical supports they need to become stable, successful young adults. When we support them, they respond.
- Safe Harbor kick-starts services where none currently exist, expands programs to address unmet needs and sustains existing programs.
- Safe Harbor leverages federal, local and private philanthropic funds. It does not fully fund any programs. Our community and nonprofit partners use state funds wisely!
- In a cost benefit study by the University of Minnesota UROC in 2012 (Early Intervention to Avoid Sex Trading and Trafficking of Minnesota's Female Youth: A Benefit Cost Analysis) found that for every \$1 dollar invested in housing for trafficked youth that it saved Minnesota taxpayers \$34.
- We, as a community, have a vested interest in supporting sexually exploited youth – both in terms of future costs avoided and the gains we collectively realize when youth are able to live stable lives and fully participate in our community.