

We are finally seeing some movement on AB267 or what has become known as the Safe Harbor bill. The Safe Harbor bill is a two part bill that works to protect the most vulnerable human trafficking victims, children. The first part of this bill would mandate that if a child abuse investigation be initiated if a non-caregiver is found to be encouraging, permitting or allowing a child to take part in prostitution. The second part of the bill would not allow children under the age of 18 to be charged with prostitution. Our neighboring states all have Safe Harbor laws that would not permit children to be charged for crimes related to being a victim of human trafficking. Minnesota saw a large increase in prosecution of traffickers once victims were no longer afraid that they would be going to jail. Safe Harbor is a win-win policy. It protects the victims and makes it more likely that the true criminals end up in jail. It is time Wisconsin has Safe Harbor laws. This bill was introduced in June with bipartisan support and finally had a hearing held at the end of October. We still need to get this bill voted on in committee, then it will go to the full Assembly and finally on to the Senate. How can you help? Contact members of the Assembly's Committee on Children and Families and let them know this bill needs to be passed. Then contact your Assemblyperson and Senator and tell them to vote for Safe Harbor. Together, we can make Wisconsin safer for underage victims of human trafficking.