

Human Trafficking Advocates

Policy Brief

In the United States in 2017 the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act was created, “a bill that amends the federal criminal code to establish a process to vacate convictions and expunge arrests for criminal offenses committed by trafficking victims that directly result from or relate to having been a trafficking victim” (Wagner, 2017). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, in 2003 Washington became the first state to criminalize human trafficking. Since then twenty-seven states have created procedures for survivors to expunge, vacate or seal criminal records related to being trafficked. Most states will grant immunity for youth under the age of eighteen from being charged with certain crimes. On the other hand Kentucky, Montana, North Dakota, and Oklahoma require proof that a child was trafficked for immunity (2018). Tennessee has a policy for minors not to be charged but not for those over the age of eighteen who have already been convicted.

Advocating for implementation of expungement policy across the United States as a whole there will be a positive and active difference in the survivor’s lives. Ball’s (2013) review of Florida’s expungement law found the following: One of the hardest parts for victims is the record they are left with - if they are lucky enough to escape from the trafficker. Many victims are convicted of theft, drug possession, prostitution, loitering, and other crimes that make it very difficult to build a life after escaping (p. 132). Survivor's arrest record unfortunately follows the survivor throughout their lifetime negatively affecting opportunities for them to improve their life. Survivors will be able to obtain housing, employment, education, financial assistance, and etcetera. Having their records sealed, receiving social services will greatly make a difference in their lives. There are many events and agencies throughout the world to stop human trafficking

and adding this policy will take these efforts a step further. President Donald Trump even proclaimed that January 2018 would be recognized as a National Slavery and Human Trafficking Month (2017). Due to human sex trafficking taking place across state lines this policy becoming a federal and national policy will enable states to work together to end sex trafficking and help survivors. Continual advocating for expungement in all states this issue won't continue to be an epidemic. Without support, funding given to organizations, restitution from the trafficker, and even a chance to fight survivors will return to their traffickers.