

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-THREE

**JOINT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE MONTH OF
JANUARY 2023 AS NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING
PREVENTION MONTH**

WHEREAS, human trafficking is criminal recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sexual exploitation through the use of force, fraud or coercion, including but not limited to involuntary servitude, sex trafficking, debt bondage, domestic servitude and forced child labor, and can, but does not necessarily, include the physical transportation of a victim from one location to another; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking violates basic human rights, denies victims their personal freedom and knows no geographical boundaries; and

WHEREAS, traffickers target children and adults of all genders, both United States citizens and foreign nationals, isolate them from society and exploit them for personal and monetary gain; and

WHEREAS, victims of human trafficking suffer severe emotional, psychological and physical damage at the hands of their traffickers, who instill fear in their victims in order to keep them enslaved, resulting in complex post-traumatic stress disorder and increased rates of disease, drug addiction and other lifelong effects of trauma, and these experiences may require years of specialized health care and mental health services as part of a victim's recovery; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking is recognized as one of the fastest-growing criminal enterprises in the world, and the International Labour Organization estimates annual profits of \$75,000,000,000 from forced labor internationally; and

WHEREAS, the International Labour Organization estimates that 12% of persons in forced labor are children, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimated in 2022 that one out of every 6 endangered runaways in the United States reported to them was likely a child sex trafficking victim; and

WHEREAS, in a 2015 report commissioned by the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault, researchers found that between 200 and 300 people in Maine are victims of human trafficking each year; and

WHEREAS, the work of preventing and combating human trafficking and related crimes in Maine has been undertaken by invaluable organizations such as Survivor Speak USA, founded and led by the late Dianne "Dee" Clarke of Portland; and

WHEREAS, Survivor Speak USA is a Maine-based, survivor-led organization working to end sex trafficking and sexual exploitation through centering the experiences, healing, voices and leadership of survivors; and

WHEREAS, Dee Clarke, a survivor herself of sex trafficking and exploitation, devoted her life to ending sex trafficking by empowering survivors to create social and political change,

including by leading the charge to pass LD 1455, An Act To Support Survivors of Sex Trafficking and Exploitation, which was signed into law June 21, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the State is committed to protecting the vulnerable and ending human trafficking through prevention, prosecution, education and awareness, including by amplifying the voices of survivors and those who work tirelessly at the grassroots level to combat it; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Thirty-first Legislature now assembled in the First Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize the month of January 2023 as National Human Trafficking Prevention Month.