

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terry Sutton

*President*

Chip Leighton

*Vice President*

Yemaya St. Clair

*Secretary*

Jennifer Wilson

*Treasurer*

Joann Bautista

Terry Davies

Lauren Gauthier

John Roberts

Elaine Rosen

Kini Schoop

Maurice A. Selinger III

Jay Tansey

Lannie Welch

Lori Whynot

Mark R. Swann

*Executive Director*

55 Portland Street

Portland, ME 04101

207.775.0026

[info@preblestreet.org](mailto:info@preblestreet.org)

[www.preblestreet.org](http://www.preblestreet.org)



United Way  
of Southern Maine



Hello Chair Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Daniella Cameron. I am the Deputy Director of Preble Street and founder of Preble Street's Anti-Trafficking Services. I am writing to testify neither for nor against LD1435: An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation. At Preble Street, we stand in support of reducing any form of worker exploitation but are concerned about the way that this bill is written. The intersection of sex work and exploitation is an incredibly complicated issue that requires us to take a step back, devoting time and attention to arrive at a more holistic approach to decriminalizing sex work.

Preble Street believes in the full decriminalization of sex work. Full decriminalization reduces violence and exploitation and increases safety for people of all genders. It also empowers workers to operate independently, reducing vulnerability to trafficking. Increased enforcement and criminalization of people who purchase sexual services does nothing to support victims and does not address root causes of exploitation and trafficking.

One of our biggest concerns with this bill is that it assumes all sex work is non-consensual, when we know that consensual sex work among adults is occurring throughout Maine. And we know that increasing the rights of consensual sex workers is what leads to greater safety while minimizing exploitation. The reality is, marginalized individuals often rely on sex work for economic survival due to systemic discrimination, including in the workplace, based on their race, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. The presumption made in the language of LD1435 conflates consensual sex work with the separate issue of trafficking and will mean that consensual sex workers will have their livelihoods actively criminalized. Criminalization, discrimination by service-providers, and stigma make people who rely on sex work to make a living more vulnerable to violence, victimization, and exploitation.

Successful approaches to address trafficking must protect all the rights of survivors and respect their bodily autonomy, agency, and self-determination. Focusing on the rights of each individual and advocating for change in systems is the only path to restoring their dignity and giving them the opportunity to reclaim their life. Human rights-based trafficking prevention focuses on the root causes that create vulnerability to trafficking in the first place, such as poverty, homelessness, hunger, weak labor protections, and discrimination.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Terry Sutton  
*President*
- Chip Leighton  
*Vice President*
- Yemaya St. Clair  
*Secretary*
- Jennifer Wilson  
*Treasurer*
- Joann Bautista
- Terry Davies
- Lauren Gauthier
- John Roberts
- Elaine Rosen
- Kini Schoop
- Maurice A. Selinger III
- Jay Tansey
- Lannie Welch
- Lori Whynot
- 
- Mark R. Swann  
*Executive Director*

Preble Street uses this human rights-based approach in all of our anti-trafficking work. We center the survivor’s voice and choice and are committed to meaningful improvements in the health and safety of people who trade sex. Related legislation should do the same.

In light of these concerns, I ask that the legislature take more time to consider the nuances of this issue, rather than rushing to pass legislation that harmfully conflates sex work with forms of exploitation. The muddling of these two complex matters creates a pathway to further criminalization and trauma for both consensual sex workers and survivors of trafficking — the last thing that any of us want.

Thank you for your time.

55 Portland Street  
Portland, ME 04101  
207.775.0026  
[info@preblestreet.org](mailto:info@preblestreet.org)  
[www.preblestreet.org](http://www.preblestreet.org)



United Way  
of Southern Maine



