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United Way
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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 in support of LD1436: An Act to Provide Remedies for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation.

Preble Street strongly supports legislation that mitigates the intense stigma and criminalization that survivors of commercial sexual exploitation face and strengthens the support these individuals are offered. The sealing of criminal history record information relating to a criminal conviction of prostitution and the convening of a commercial sexual exploitation survivor and human trafficking victim assistance stakeholder group to make service recommendations is a strong step in the right direction.

Many of the survivors we have served over the years were either incarcerated during intake, while receiving services and/or self-reported a history of incarceration. Since 2020, more than half self-reported that they were trafficked specifically for criminal labor, meaning their trafficker made money by forcing them to commit crimes, including drug trafficking. These survivors face painful and lasting consequences within the criminal justice system for acts they were forced to commit against their will.

The National Survivor Network surveyed 130 survivors and found that 90% had been arrested at least once while being trafficked. While the nature of the arrest and charges vary depending on the type of trafficking, minimal services are currently operating for survivors within the Maine Department of Corrections. Upon release, survivors face an increased risk of being re-trafficked due to many factors, including isolation from support systems, lack of housing or secure employment, lack of protection of previous traffickers, and lack of mental health services and healthcare.



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Survivors of human trafficking and exploitation often face barriers to recovery and healing after exiting their trafficking situation because of criminal charges incurred during their trafficking experience. The sealing of records recommended in LD1436 protects survivors from facing barriers to employment and housing, and experiencing the stigma that comes with a criminal record.

In the words of the late Dee Clarke, a powerful advocate for survivors, “It matters if you have a criminal record. And it matters how you feel about yourself if on one hand some will say you were victimized, but the world still says you’re a criminal.” That being said, I urge you to support the passage of LD1436. I appreciate your time and consideration. Thank you.

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