

TESTIMONY OF ILONKA DEATON
IN SUPPORT OF LD 1395
An Act Regarding Human Trafficking Prevention Instruction and Dissemination of and
Access to Obscene Material in Schools
Before the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
132nd Maine Legislature, First Special Session
April 13, 2025

Chairpersons, members of the Committee:

My name is **Ilonka Deaton**. I am a recording artist, a curriculum writer, a national advocate against human trafficking—and most importantly, a survivor.

From the age of 12 to 18, I was sex trafficked within the music industry. I was just a child when my exploitation began, and I lived those six years believing that no one would ever protect me because no one ever taught me what was really happening to me. I didn't have the words. I didn't know the signs. And worst of all, I thought I was to blame.

That is why I am urging you today to support **LD 1395**.

This bill does two critical things:

1. It **protects children** from being exposed to obscene and pornographic material through school-sponsored digital resources; and
2. It **empowers students and staff** with the tools to recognize, prevent, and respond to human trafficking and child exploitation.

What if someone had taught me what trafficking looked like?

Had I received education in school about sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking—things that were happening to me—I believe my life could have taken a different course much sooner. I might have found the courage to ask for help earlier. I might have recognized the manipulation and coercion for what it was. Education gives language to the voiceless. It gives victims a mirror and, eventually, a map out.

Traffickers thrive in silence and ignorance. This bill shatters both.

The Danger of Obscene Material in Schools

As someone who now walks with survivors through recovery, I can tell you that exposure to pornography and obscene content is one of the most common gateways traffickers use to desensitize and manipulate children. School is supposed to be a safe place—yet right now, some digital databases being offered to students are **not protected by proper filters**, leaving minors vulnerable to accessing explicit material, sometimes without even realizing what they're clicking on.

Obscene material does not educate—it exploits. And allowing such content to be distributed under the guise of education, even unintentionally, is not only irresponsible—it’s dangerous.

This bill closes the loophole that exempts public schools from accountability in distributing obscene content. It also holds vendors financially accountable when they fail to implement appropriate content protections.

A Nation Rising to Protect Its Children

Maine can join a growing number of states stepping up to protect their children. **Texas, Utah, Florida, and Arkansas** have already taken measures to restrict explicit materials in school databases and libraries. **California, Virginia, and Tennessee** require some form of human trafficking prevention education. The nation is waking up to the crisis—and **LD 1395 positions Maine as a leader** in this movement.

In Closing

I’m not just speaking as a policy advocate today. I’m speaking as someone who knows what it’s like to live through the very horrors this bill is trying to prevent. And I know what it’s like to finally find healing—but only after years of silence and shame.

Let’s not make children wait until they’re adults to learn how to protect themselves. Let’s not make another survivor wonder why no one ever said anything sooner.

LD 1395 will protect, inform, and empower. Please pass it.

Thank you for your time and your willingness to be protectors of Maine’s children.

With gratitude,
Ilonka Deaton
Survivor | Advocate |