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My name is Brooke Miller, and I am a Winterport resident. I am also in my third year serving as a Winterport representative on the RSU22 School Board. I am a mom of two and a pilot for a major U.S. airline. I have worked in research and investigation for a private investigator and a law firm in the area.

Maine has been seeing an increase in missing children, one of the most recent being a teenage girl from Aroostook County who disappeared in September 2024 and is yet to be recovered. Another teenage girl from the same area was involved in an odd custody situation between her mother, her church and a concerned church member which may have crossed state lines.

Trafficking is often described in a vacuum where it "looks" one particular way. Even in training designed by government agencies designated to stop trafficking, it is portrayed as something that happens in third world countries or to runaways or to prostitutes. The truth of the matter is that any one of our children can become a target of trafficking. There are high wealth individuals who place "orders" for children of a certain age, sex, hair or eye color, and race. There are networks in every part of the globe who will fulfill these orders and massive amounts of money changes hands. American children from good homes are highly sought after commodities in these markets.

In many states including Maine, government housing is being built as close as a tenth of a mile from the legal distance that a registered sex offender can reside according to the statute. Maine is a state where both parents in the household work, so children can often get off the bus to an empty home for a few hours. It is extremely important for children to have an age-appropriate awareness of their surroundings, who they can go to for help and how to stay safe when it comes to human trafficking.

Parents ultimately should have the role of teaching their kids and keeping them safe; however, not all parents may know the signs or warnings of trafficking. I endorse this bill because it will allow individual schools the opportunity to teach the students and staff about trafficking. I would even suggest that the curriculum and instruction should be open to parents sitting in with their children so that our communities as a whole can be better educated to truly combat human trafficking. Finally, I believe that the sourcing of the curriculum should be left to each individual school district and its leadership.

Human trafficking is about to surpass drug trafficking in terms of money. The cartels can make more money selling humans over and over while drugs can only be sold once. It is a huge business. Our children should not be left vulnerable. We all have a role to play to keep ALL children safe and end human trafficking for real instead of just on paper, and that requires full community involvement. What better way to start that conversation than in one of the two big focal points in our communities - schools!

Thank you for your consideration.