

Testimony in Support of LD 1695

Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

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Date: 28 April 2025

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Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and Distinguished Members of the  
Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Steve Dyer, and I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 1695, An Act to Provide Law Enforcement Agencies with an Anti-Sex-Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Protocol.

Human trafficking is a hidden epidemic that devastates lives, undermines public safety, and tears at the very fabric of our communities. Here in Maine, survivors have bravely come forward, organizations have built bridges of support, and law enforcement has demonstrated growing awareness. However, without a standardized, trauma-informed response protocol across all law enforcement agencies, many victims remain unseen, unsupported, and unheard.

LD 1695 is urgently needed for three critical reasons:

1. It Centers the Victim, Not the Crime

Research from national and local studies — including Maine's own Not Here Strategic Roadmap (2017) and the federal National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (2022) — highlights that survivors often fear law enforcement because of past experiences where they were treated as criminals instead of victims.

This bill ensures that when an officer suspects human trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation, they will inquire sensitively, respond compassionately, and connect survivors to critical services — including shelter, mental health care, substance use support, and case management.

2. It Strengthens Law Enforcement's Ability to Fight Trafficking Effectively

Across the country, collaborative models like those described by the Police Executive Research Forum (2020) and the Santa Clara County Law Enforcement Protocol (2020) have demonstrated that when officers are trained to spot

trafficking indicators and partner with service organizations, successful victim rescues and prosecutions increase dramatically.

LD 1695 provides Maine officers with a clear model, based on best practices, without forcing a "one-size-fits-all" approach. It empowers each department to create a protocol suited to its local context while leveraging expertise from the Department of Public Safety's model.

### 3. It Builds a Coordinated, Statewide Response

Maine cannot afford fragmented approaches to trafficking. Survivors often move across jurisdictions, traffickers exploit gaps in services, and disjointed practices cause confusion.

By requiring every law enforcement agency to have a clear, survivor-centered protocol by 2026, LD 1695 ensures consistency, accountability, and collaboration across the state — aligning Maine with successful models seen in Colorado (2019), Indiana (n.d.), Massachusetts (2021), and nationally.

In Conclusion:

The passage of LD 1695 sends a clear, moral message:

- Maine will not turn a blind eye to the exploitation of its most vulnerable.
- By adopting a thoughtful, trauma-informed approach to survivors, we can break the cycle of exploitation, bring traffickers to justice, and offer true hope to those who have suffered.

Please vote Ought to Pass on LD 1695.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to justice.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Name: Steve Dyer

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