



City of Brewer Police Department

May 12, 2025

**Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the
Committee On Judiciary:**

This testimony is in support of the passage of LD 1877, "An Act to Increase Penalties for Human Trafficking Offenses".

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of proposed legislation that seeks to enhance criminal penalties for sex trafficking offenses. I am Paul Gauvin, a Detective Sergeant with the Brewer Police Department.

Sex trafficking is one of the most heinous crimes in our society. It involves the exploitation of individuals—many of them women, children, and marginalized persons—through force, fraud, or coercion for commercial sex. These crimes not only cause unimaginable physical and psychological trauma but also represent a profound violation of human dignity and freedom.

Despite the existence of state and federal statutes addressing sex trafficking, current penalties often do not reflect the severity of the harm inflicted. In some jurisdictions, traffickers can exploit legal loopholes or receive lenient sentences that do not deter future offenses or deliver justice to survivors. Enhancing criminal penalties will help correct these deficiencies and send a strong, unequivocal message: our communities will not tolerate human trafficking.

There are several key reasons why enhanced penalties are both appropriate and necessary:

1. **Deterrence:** Stronger penalties increase the risk associated with trafficking and can serve as a meaningful deterrent to would-be offenders. Trafficking operations are often driven by profit motives; increasing the criminal consequences can disrupt these illegal business models.
2. **Justice for Victims:** Survivors of trafficking deserve to see their traffickers held fully accountable. Enhanced penalties better reflect the severity of the trauma inflicted and validate the experiences of those who have endured exploitation.
3. **Alignment with Federal Standards:** Many federal trafficking charges carry more severe penalties than their state-level counterparts. Aligning state



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law with federal sentencing guidelines can strengthen coordination between jurisdictions and reduce the risk of inconsistent or inadequate sentencing.

4. **Public Safety:** Traffickers often operate within broader criminal networks involving drug trafficking, organized crime, and gang activity. Enhanced penalties help incapacitate dangerous offenders who pose a continued threat to public safety.

We recognize that strengthening penalties is only one component of an effective response. Support for survivor services, public education, and improved law enforcement training must accompany legislative reform. However, increased penalties are a critical step toward dismantling trafficking networks and ensuring accountability.

In closing, I respectfully urge this committee to support the proposed legislation to enhance criminal penalties for sex trafficking offenses. This is a vital opportunity to protect vulnerable individuals, support survivors, and uphold justice in our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Detective Sergeant Paul Gauvin
Brewer Police Department



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Overview of related federal penalties:

Federal penalties for sex trafficking in the United States are severe and are primarily governed by the **Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)**, as codified in **18 U.S. Code § 1591**. Here's a summary of the key penalties:

18 U.S.C. § 1591 – Sex Trafficking of Children or by Force, Fraud, or Coercion

1. General Penalty:

- **Minimum of 15 years to life in prison** if:
 - The victim is under 14 years old.
 - The offense involved force, fraud, or coercion regardless of age.

2. If the victim is between 14 and 17 years old:

- **Minimum of 10 years to life in prison** if no force, fraud, or coercion is used.

3. Additional factors that can increase penalties:

- If death results from the offense, or if it involves aggravated sexual abuse: **Life imprisonment.**
 - Fines may also be imposed in addition to prison time.
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Other Relevant Federal Statutes

- **18 U.S.C. § 1594:** Allows for **forfeiture** of assets used or obtained through trafficking.
- **18 U.S.C. § 2423:** Covers transporting minors for sexual activity; penalties range from 10 years to life depending on specifics.
- **Racketeering (RICO) statutes** and **conspiracy charges** may also apply, leading to additional penalties.