

Mistilynn Richardson
Lewiston
LD 1805

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Mistilynn Richardson and I live in Lewiston, Maine. I am here to testify in support of LD 1871 An Act to Permit Sealing Criminal History Record Information of Victims of Sex Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation.

As a survivor myself, I can personally say how this act would be beneficial to so many of us moving forward in life. I recently completed my bachelor's degree in criminal justice in hopes of helping children that struggle with mental health and addiction - however, my past criminal history is preventing me to live out my dreams. I want to prevent people from going down the same paths I did, and ending up in my very same position. This act would help people like myself to expunge our criminal history that is related to sex Trafficking and exploitation. We are the same people that could share our stories in hopes to helping others, yet our criminal history sometimes prevents us from being able to work in those positions. Our crimes do not reflect the people that we are. Today, it's been almost 7 years that I have had any criminal history. Today I wouldn't even commit the crimes I once did. Nor would I have committed some of the crimes that I had - had I not been in some of the situations that I was. It is hard to get out of those situations when you have no support from friends or family. I grew up in the foster care system, and didn't have support from family. Honestly, going to jail saved my life. It was where I was able to get connected to safe voices and set up resources when I got out to be able to get a fresh start. There, I felt safe and supported. Now here I am, almost 8 years later. Just completed my bachelor's degree and raising two kids on my own. Before I was contacted about this act, it was what I was talking to others about wanting to do. Because we shouldn't be tied to our crimes for the rest of our lives. We are good people, stuck in bad situations. I am trying to be a good member of society, helping other people to get out of the situation I was in or even prevent people from getting into these positions. I appreciate your time and I hope that you do consider LD 1871 to Permit Sealing Criminal History Record Information of Victims of Sex Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation.