

May 12, 2025

Re: Support of LD1871 and LD1805

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of World Without Exploitation in support of two bills before your committee today:

- *LD1871: An Act to Permit Sealing Criminal History Record Information of Victims of Sex Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation*
- *LD1805: An Act to Establish a Post-conviction Review Process for Crimes Committed by Victims of Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation.*

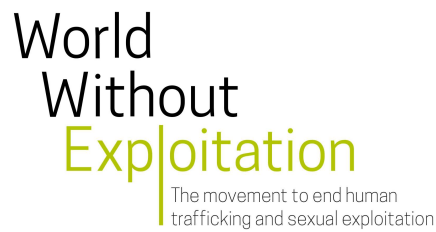
World Without Exploitation (WorldWE) is the country's largest national anti-trafficking coalition with over 175 non-governmental organization (NGO) members. We unite communities across the country to advocate for policies that result in permanent solutions to combat human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and their underlying causes. We also work directly with and on behalf of hundreds of survivors across the country. Many of these survivors have experienced criminalization because of their trafficking.

Survivors of human trafficking are often criminalized for situations stemming from their trafficking experiences. Having a criminal record—or even an arrest record without a conviction—can make it harder or virtually impossible for survivors to secure jobs, rent apartments, and move on with their lives after their exploitation. These convictions often stem from crimes such as theft, drug-related offenses, financial crimes, and other illegal acts that victims are compelled to commit during their trafficking—crimes from which they derive no financial benefit.

For the vast majority of survivors, their criminal records are directly related to their trafficking. A National Survivor Study by the Polaris Project<sup>1</sup> found that for a majority of survivors, their criminal record created barriers to securing gainful employment, finding safe housing, continuing their education, and receiving child custody.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://polarisproject.org/national-survivor-study/>



Survivors of sex trafficking deserve justice, healing, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives without being permanently punished for crimes they were coerced into committing. These criminal records can haunt them for years, creating insurmountable barriers to employment, housing, education, and safety.

Sealing these records is not about erasing the past; rather, it is about recognizing the context of trauma and exploitation in which these acts occurred. It is about offering survivors a path to dignity and reintegration, free from the stigma and discrimination that unjustly follow them. Survivors should not be continually punished for crimes that were, in reality, manifestations of the abuse they suffered.

By supporting the sealing of these records, we affirm a fundamental truth: survivors of trafficking are not criminals—they are victims and survivors. Offering them legal relief is not only an act of compassion but also a necessary step toward justice and healing.

We thank you for your time and your support.

Rebecca Zipkin

Policy Director, World Without Exploitation

*World Without Exploitation is a fiscally-sponsored project of Tides Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization*

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