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THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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*Testimony of Senate President Mattie Daughtry in support of
LD 524, "An Act to Protect Children from Technology-facilitated Sexual Abuse"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary*

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Mattie Daughtry. I serve as President of the Maine Senate and proudly represent Senate District 23, including Brunswick, Freeport, Harpswell, Pownal, Chebeague Island, and part of Yarmouth. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of LD 524, "An Act to Protect Children from Technology-facilitated Sexual Abuse."

Before addressing the bill itself, I want to clarify something that has come up publicly about its path in this committee.

In recent weeks, there has been commentary suggesting that Democrats on Legislative Council declined to advance another bill on this subject because we did not want to regulate this space. That characterization is not accurate. That bill request was not admitted because Rep. Kuhn was already developing LD 524 — a comprehensive, legally sound, and fully formed approach to the issue. Legislative Council chose to move forward with the bill that was already in process and ready for committee consideration.

This was not about rejecting the issue. It was about ensuring the Legislature worked from a single, complete proposal rather than duplicative or partial concepts.

LD 524 is that proposal. It reflects careful work by Rep. Kuhn, legal experts, and other stakeholders who understand how rapidly technology is changing the landscape of child exploitation. The bill ensures that Maine law keeps pace with those changes — especially the rise of AI-generated or manipulated images that can depict children in abusive scenarios without any physical contact ever occurring.

The amendment to LD 524 strengthens Maine's laws by:

- Updating definitions to include AI-generated and altered images
- Closing loopholes that have allowed perpetrators to evade accountability
- Clarifying evidentiary standards so prosecutors and courts can act with confidence
- Ensuring penalties reflect the seriousness of these offenses

As someone who works every day to create a better future for Maine's children, I can attest to the real and lasting harm that technology-facilitated abuse causes. LD 524 provides the legal clarity and enforcement tools that children, families, and law enforcement urgently need. This is exactly the kind of careful, thoughtful statutory update that this moment demands.

Maine's children deserve a legal framework that recognizes the very real harm caused by technology-facilitated abuse. Rep. Kuhn's bill provides that structure. I am grateful for her leadership and for the committee's attention to this urgent issue.

I respectfully urge you to support LD 524. Thank you for your consideration.