



February 3, 2026

Maine State House
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 2168

An Act to Increase Accountability for Persons Engaged in Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking and to Support Victims

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

My name is Bella Peracchi, and I am from Stratham, New Hampshire, and also attended Berwick Academy in South Berwick, Maine. I am the Policy Associate at 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.

WorldWE worked closely with Representative Lois Reckitt to pass the first law in the nation that decriminalizes people who are being bought and sold in prostitution. We believe Maine is on the right side of history in passing this law, which is in line with a legal framework known as the Survivor Model or Equality Model. This legislative framework decriminalizes people being bought and sold, prioritizes services and support instead of arrest, and holds the people causing harm, such as exploiters and sex buyers, accountable.

Today, we are here in support of LD 2168 in order to advance/further the efforts to bring the Survivor Model to Maine.

The global sex trade is fueled by the exploitation of vulnerable women and children through power imbalances and coercion by sex buyers who tend to be wealthy men. A 2024 study conducted by leading experts on prostitution reported that 98% of prostituted women had been raped by sex buyers or pimps.¹ A Colorado medical study found that 92% of women in the sex trade report having been raped, shot, strangled, burned, beaten, stabbed, or punched.² Violence is not an exception in prostitution—it is the norm.

Prostitution and sex trafficking are inextricably linked. Demand from sex buyers fuels sexual exploitation and

¹ Melissa Farley and M. Alexis Kennedy, "Torture and Its Sequelae Among Prostituted Women in the United States," European Journal of Psychotraumatology 15, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008066.2024.2404307>.

² Jody Raphael and Katie Feifer, Get the Facts: What We Know About Sex Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation, and Prostitution in the United States (World Without Exploitation, January 2020), <https://www.equalitymodelus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Get-the-Facts-January-2020.pdf>.

directly drives prostitution and trafficking.

LD 2168 seeks to create an additional fee for perpetrators of this group of crimes and to ensure that those funds collected from sex buyers are directed to support victims and survivors. By providing additional support for critical services and resources in Maine, individuals are given the opportunity to escape this vicious cycle, leave their abusers, and have a chance at a new life.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

Bella Peracchi,
Policy Associate, World Without Exploitation