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Good afternoon, Chair Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Committee on Health and Human Services members.

My name is Jade Johnson and I am the Director of Preble Street’s Anti-Trafficking Services. I am here today to ask for your support in the passage of LD1092: An Act to Prevent the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the State. Since 1975, Preble Street has served some of the most vulnerable people in Maine and won’t rest until hunger and homelessness are a thing of the past. Preble Street first became involved in anti-trafficking work over ten years ago when clients at our Teen Center came to us asking for help. They were afraid for their lives—caught up in coercive work and exploitative relationships, forced to choose between basic survival and their physical and emotional safety.

Since 2013, Preble Street Anti-Trafficking Services (ATS) has provided services and support to more than 600 victims of human trafficking throughout the state, representing all ages, genders, and forms of trafficking. ATS provides intensive case management to survivors by connecting them to safe shelter and housing, access to medical care, mental health and substance use treatment, legal system advocacy and more.

For the past five years, we have worked closely with the Cumberland County Child Advocacy Center, collaborating in support of the identification and response to survivors of CSEC and their families. We see firsthand the success of this model, which currently exists only in Cumberland County. Yet we know that children are being exploited all over Maine. ATS has received calls and referrals from every single county—indicating the prevalence of CSEC crimes and the need for establishing services beyond Maine’s most populous centers. Replicating and expanding services with sustainable funding is necessary for Maine to effectively respond to this horrific crime.

We worked with one school-aged survivor who has navigated systems for most of her life. Starting at nine years old, she was groomed by a close family friend, and exploited in her home. She spent years being manipulated and monitored by those closest to her, missing school and being isolated from friends. Most often, children experience exploitation and abuse at the hands of trusted adults. After years of attempted outreach, she took a chance, and chose to reach out to us for services. With support from an ATS case worker, she returned to school and started counseling, initiated a student advocacy campaign at her school and finished driver’s ed. After some time, she told her caseworker she felt “changed for the better” by her engagement with services. Intensive Case Management created opportunities for her to empower herself towards healing and be able to refocus on being a kid once again.



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This...is *true success* and just one example of how intensive case management services are a lifeline for survivors who have experienced the trauma of exploitation. These services are a critical part of a comprehensive, coordinated, and trauma-informed response to exploitation. We urge you to pass LD102 to ensure that CSEC survivors across Maine who have lived through the immense trauma of exploitation have access to needed services to help them on their journey to safety, healing, and recovery.

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United Way  
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