

**Testimony of Caitlen Macias  
Representative from World Without Exploitation  
Joint Judiciary Committee of the Maine Legislature**

**In Support of: LD 1435 An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation and  
LD 1436 An Act to Provide Remedies for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

April 11, 2023

Hello, my name is Caitlen Macias and I am here representing World Without Exploitation, the largest national anti-human trafficking coalition with over 200 U.S. based organizations working to create a world free from commercial sexual exploitation. We are guided by survivors of the commercial sex trade, whose perspectives are critical in developing just and effective policy.

In 2020, I co-founded the World Without Exploitation Youth Coalition, a youth-led movement aiming to engage other young people in efforts to end commercial sexual exploitation. I stand here today in support LD 1435 An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation and LD 1436 An Act to Provide Remedies for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation. These bills are equally important and should be passed together.

As someone who works with youth every day as a social worker and therapist, I know how susceptible young people are to entering the sex trade, with a higher risk for those who are in foster care, have a history of childhood sexual abuse, and those part of the LGBTQ+ community. Many are brought in under false pretenses, recruited by their “boyfriends” and even family members. **LD 1435 would decriminalize those bought and sold in the sex trade** and provide them with the necessary services to heal and thrive. Moreover, it would protect our children by making **commercial sexual exploitation of a child and solicitation of child for sexual exploitation Class C crimes**. The most vulnerable youth in Maine need your support.

In order to support law enforcement in the state, the creation of an anti-sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation protocol would assist in the identification of survivors so they can get the services they need. Just two months ago, I identified two potential cases of commercial sexual exploitation of a child, these children were being kept under control through drugs, just 30 minutes from my home. Because the police had never been trained on the dimensions of the crime and lack of a protocol, the police did nothing to help these children.

For those who have exited, LD 1436 would seal records of convictions for survivors of prostitution. Survivors we work with have stressed the importance of being able to seal

records, so they can move on with their lives and seek out employment. Additionally, bringing private and public funders together to improve services for survivors is vital. Survivors of CSE face enduring mental and physical challenges including needing surgeries, continued therapy, housing, and employment. Services in Maine need to meet those needs.

I urge you today to VOTE YES on LD 1435 and LD 1436 for survivors and youth in your community. You can be part of the solution.

Thank you for your time today. I will now take questions.