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Testimony supporting

LD 1435 An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation

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Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, esteemed Judiciary Committee members, thank you for hearing this bill. And thanks to Representative Reckitt for introducing it.

I support this bill because it would protect victims -- those exploited, trafficked, and in some cases, literally enslaved. Both children and adults fall victim to sexual exploitation. Some people are struck with disbelief that this could happen in America. The Frontline documentary "Sex Trafficking in America" illustrates with police footage and interviews how this happens.¹ I've included the link in my submitted testimony.

For impacted children and adults, commercial sexual exploitation has severe social, legal, and health-related consequences. I'll focus on the health related ones. The medical profession has increasingly begun to pay attention to the health harms of sexual exploitation. A 2020 paper in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), for instance, pointed out that people who are sexually exploited:

...are often psychologically controlled and manipulated by perpetrators; experience forcible isolation, rape, and extreme physical violence; incur sexually transmitted infections; and experience psychopathology, suicidality, and substance addiction. These outcomes have substantial economic costs, including service provision by child protection and health departments and long-term effects across the lifetime on the health and well-being of the individual.²

¹ <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/sex-trafficking-in-america/>

² Laird JJ, Klettke B, Hall K, Clancy E, Hallford D. Demographic and Psychosocial Factors Associated With Child Sexual Exploitation: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(9):e2017682. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.17682
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2770752>

This bill supports the top recommendations of a 2013 report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine on commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking³:

1. Raise awareness of commercial sexual exploitation.
2. Develop laws and policies that redirect young victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking from arrest and prosecution as criminals or adjudication as delinquents
3. Review, strengthen, and implement laws that hold exploiters, traffickers, and solicitors accountable for their role in commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors.

I ask the committee to support this bill. Thank you.

³ National Research Council. 2013. Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/18358>. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/download/18358>