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*Testimony of Rep. Lynn Copeland in strong support of
LD 1435, An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary*

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Lynn Copeland, and I am honored to represent the citizens of House District 130, in Saco. I stand before you this afternoon in strong support of LD 1435, An Act to Reduce commercial Sexual Exploitation, that has been brought forward by Representative Reckitt.

This bill is focuses on helping children, women, the mentally disabled and others who find themselves victims of commercial sexual exploitation, including human trafficking.

Criminally charging victims of non-consensual prostitution defies logic. They are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Criminal charges are better put on those who exploit them. What the victims need is not punishment, but help.

The victims are people who have value and who are unable to break free of their oppression. This bill provides support through information and law enforcement protocols which provide existing community resources to them, as identified in the bill. The victims should not be made to have self-guilt or self-blame. Their oppressors took away their rights of the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. When acknowledged, as the victims they are, and supported, these people will be well on their way to becoming contributing members of society with a renewed sense of self-worth and enterprise.

Instead of convicting victims, it is far more equitable and just to enact this anti-sex-trafficking and commercial exploitation legislation, giving clear protocols for law enforcement agencies to help victims.

Lynn H. Copeland