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Testimony of Representative Laurie Osher in support of

LD 1435: An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation

LD 1436: An Act to Provide Remedies for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Rep. Laurie Osher and I represent District 25, most of Orono. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to express my support **LD 1435: An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation and LD 1436: An Act to Provide Remedies for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation.**

Maine, like the rest of the world, has a sexual exploitation problem. According to the Maine Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Network, three to four hundred individuals are sex trafficked in Maine annually. Those interviewed included individuals as young as fourteen.

Prostitution is an industry that is perpetuated by people who buy sex. Their actions encourage the exploitation that is the commercial sex trade. Those who engage in prostitution should not be seen as the perpetrators of crimes, but as citizens who are survivors of the crime of trafficking.

LD 1435 replaces the crime of engaging in prostitution with a new crime of “Commercial Sexual Exploitation”. That new term uses survivor centered language.

LD 1435 Repeals the crime of engaging in prostitution and provides sex trade survivors a defense to conspiracy to commit commercial sexual exploitation and a defense of sex trafficking. It also changes the term “prostitution of a minor” to “commercial sexual exploitation of a child”.

LD 1435 makes commercial sexual exploitation of a child and solicitation of a child for sexual exploitation Class C crimes.

LD 1436 Enables survivors of prostitution to seal records of convictions and creates a stakeholder group to make recommendations for improving services to survivors.

And, near and dear to my scientist heart, LD 1436 requires data collection and reporting on crimes involving commercial sexual exploitation. Without data, we don't have the information needed to make decisions based on facts.

These bills are modeled after the laws of Norway which have decriminalized the sale of sex. The purchase of sex there is still a crime.

I thank Representative Reckitt for introducing this bill. She's worked diligently on these bills that address the problem of prostitution in Maine in a way that will reduce prostitution and support those who are survivors of sex trafficking's.