

Testimony in Support of LD 1427, An Act Extending the Statute of Limitations on Criminal Actions Involving Aggravated Sex Trafficking

By: Maegan Bell

My name is Maegan Bell and I live in Fairfield. I'm here to testify in support of LD1427

I'm a mother, a community prevention educator with the Sexual Assault Crisis and Support Center, and a survivor of sex trafficking. I'm here today in the capacity of a private citizen—someone who knows firsthand how long the road to healing can truly be.

I'm here to ask you to support extending the statute of limitations for survivors like me—from six years to twenty years. In my heart, I believe there should be no limit. But I'll take twenty, because twenty gives someone like me a chance. It gives more of us a window to reclaim our voice. It's a step toward justice. A step toward redemption.

Coming forward isn't easy. Telling the truth about trauma isn't linear. It's not something you just wake up one day ready to do. It's years of fear. Years of trying to pretend it never happened just to survive. It's years of silence that protected me when I didn't know if speaking up would get me—or someone I loved—killed.

When I was being trafficked, my trafficker had my handwritten address book. He knew where my family lived—my parents, my best friends, my cousins, even my grandparents in Maine. That book became his weapon. He'd say, "If you leave, I'll find them. I'll kill them." Forced me to shower and then left me freezing in the mudroom—cold, shivering, alone—while he pressed my address book against the door. Night after night, my body was sold on Backpage. I was threatened constantly. He reminded me he had "goons." I knew exactly where he kept his weapons. He'd point to the empty AC unit filled with guns as a threat. When I escaped, I left with nothing.

Even after I knew I was physically out, I still found myself living in fear. I didn't stay silent because I didn't want justice. I stayed silent because I didn't believe I would survive telling the truth. I didn't even know who I was outside of the trauma.

Most survivors don't come forward right away—not because we're hiding something, but because we're trying to stay alive. Many of us are terrified of reliving the past, of not being believed, of being blamed, or even—like in my case—facing retaliation. And let's be honest: trusting systems again, especially

those tied to law enforcement, is incredibly hard when you've felt invisible or failed in the past.

That's why six years is no time at all. I was trafficked at 22. I'm finally ready after over a decade at the age of 39. That's not because I wasn't strong. It's because healing takes time. Time to stop looking over our shoulders. Time to grieve, to reclaim our identity, to believe we're finally safe enough to speak up.

The current statute doesn't reflect that reality. It doesn't honor the journey it takes to stand where I'm standing today. We deserve more time—because our lives, our healing, and our stories are worth more than an arbitrary deadline.

I believe in a higher justice. One not confined to man's timelines. One that says no matter what was stolen from us, there is still something sacred to reclaim.

Let this be the year we ring the bell of freedom for every survivor who thought they ran out of time. A Liberty Bell that echoes not just through courtrooms, but through hearts. Through families. Through futures once stolen and now reclaimed.

There is no expiration on truth. No clock on courage. And like I tell my students every day:

It's never too late to tell.

Thank you for listening.