

Testimony Submitted 4/27/2025 to the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal  
Justice and Public Safety

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

**RE: An Act to Provide Law Enforcement Agencies with an Anti-sex-trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Protocol – L.D. 1695**

My Name is Nate Walsh and I am a resident of Freeport. I am also an Assistant District Attorney, proudly serving Prosecutorial District III, who has worked specifically as a Human Trafficking prosecutor for the last decade. I would like to thank you for allowing me to offer my testimony in support of L.D. 1695.

I am offering my support of the bill before you and urge you to vote that it ought to pass. I do so after spending the past decade working with members of law enforcement in Maine to combat human trafficking and offer support to survivors. Sex Trafficking investigations are difficult to carry out and require specialized training for law enforcement to build the best case possible for a successful prosecution. The most crucial aspect of these investigations is the relationship we have with our victims. Many times, the people experiencing sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation are one of the lowest points in their lives, and it takes a dedicated multi-disciplinary team of individuals to assist that person to get to a point where they can find their voice and seek justice for themselves.

Testifying in a criminal trial is intimidating for anyone. But, being called to testify about traumatic experiences that include physical violence, sexual assaults, and degrading and humiliating things that have been done and said to you can make it much harder. These survivors are told that they will be cross-examined and their trafficker will be sitting in the courtroom watching them. The need for competent and highly trained professionals to meet with these victims from the very beginning is vital. The bill before you would ensure that all members of law enforcement in Maine will be provided with guidance and standardized protocols to follow when they first suspect they're interacting with a victim of sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation.

This bill will ensure that a trafficking victim identified by a large agency with experience in sex trafficking investigations will be treated the same way as a victim located by a small rural department. A model protocol will provide guidance to the members of Maine's law enforcement agencies so they know what to do during that first crucial interaction with someone they suspect is being victimized. As it is currently written, the bill would arm police officers with information on local anti-trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault organizations, as well as ways to address immediate needs for victims who may be in crisis, suffering from substance use disorder, and lacking adequate housing. For some victims, their pimp is their source of drugs and a place to stay, so offering a way out must address those obstacles. For others, poverty is their pimp and offering help will require identifying meaningful resources locally.

Although many survivors reach out for help through anti-trafficking organizations, or by calling the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888), the police are more likely to be the first to interact with victims of sex trafficking and commercial exploitation while out in the field, and they must be a bridge to safety. An investigation that starts out trauma-informed and victim centered will result in a stronger case for prosecution, and will give justice to survivors.

I urge you to support L.D. 1659 and to vote that this bill ought to pass.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nathan R. Walsh', with a stylized, flowing script.

Nathan R. Walsh  
Assistant District Attorney  
Prosecutorial District III