

**Testimony before the Maine Legislative Committee on Criminal Justice and
Public Safety**

*LD 1695 HP 1130 Act to Provide Law Enforcement Agencies with an Anti-sex-
trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Protocol*

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Monday, April 28, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the critical issue of human trafficking in Maine. I support LD1695. Knowledge, understanding, and a coordinated protocol are essential in providing our best anti-trafficking response.

I started my full-time law enforcement career in January 1997 with the Portland Police Department. For many years I worked in the department's plain clothes/undercover unit. I started out like many do, as an undercover and then moved into operational duties, planning and leadership. A vast majority of my time and efforts were centered around vice crimes which at that time were referred to as prostitution. In 2009 the City of Portland hired James Craig as its police chief. Chief Craig brought the Senior Lead Officer program to PPD. I was fortunate enough to be selected as one of the agencies' first Senior Lead Officers and assigned to the Exit 8 sector. His directive was clear, go out and identify the problems in your sector and come up with action-oriented solutions. Several hotels were in my sector so for me it was simple, start running anti-prostitution, anti-narcotic and warrant round up operations again. That area had not seen large-scale proactive policing, so it quickly produced positive results.

However, we realized that the people we engaged with before had shifted. We were seeing female sex workers from around the country, and they appeared to be controlled by males from out of the area. Around this time a young lady had gone missing and frequented one of my sector's hotels. Her name was Megan Waterman, some may be familiar with her story. Megan was controlled or as we

now know it to be, trafficked, by her boyfriend. In December 2010 Megan's body was located, murdered, along with 3 other women, all sex workers, on an isolated section of Gilgo Beach on Long Island New York.

This had a profound effect on me and how I looked at these cases. Word spread amongst my peers that I was looking to talk with known sex workers. It was clear that the environment, or my understanding of it, had shifted. I spoke to several sex worker and educated myself and team on national best practices revolving around sexual trafficking and exploitation. That led to discussions with partner agencies such as Preble Street, Through These Doors (Domestic Violence Advocates), and Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine. It turns out they were noticing trends and were also talking about response options. From these discussions a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency coalition formed named the Greater Portland Coalition Against Sex Trafficking and Exploitation (GPCASTE). It consisted of over 40 individuals from multiple law enforcement and social service agencies. I was one of two original co-chairs for GPCASTE and the Chair of the Law Enforcement Work Group (LEWG). LEWG began running multi-agency LE operations throughout the region.

I returned to patrol, was promoted to Sergeant and eventually made it back to PPD's plain clothes/undercover unit known as the Crime Reduction Unit (CRU). We continued to run anti-trafficking operations with an emphasis on a victim-centered approach and accountability for the traffickers. We made several local and federal cases against traffickers. The LEWG evolved into the current Cumberland County Anti-Trafficking Law Enforcement Task Force facilitated out of the Cumberland County District Attorney's Office. All Cumberland County LE agencies have signed on to the initiative. I retired from Portland PD in January 2022 and began working for the Yarmouth Police Department. I currently hold the rank of Captain at YPD and remain active in the Cumberland County Anti-Trafficking Law Enforcement Task Force.

From my work in plain clothes, patrol, detail operations, as a supervisor and now as an advisor/administrator in anti-trafficking details I know it is imperative that all Maine law enforcement officers understand the basic dynamics of human trafficking and have a standardized, victim-centered, response protocol. Please provide Maine LEO's with an avenue to gain the knowledge of Human Trafficking,

the understanding of how it works, and a coordinated protocol to serve the victims of human trafficking.

Many thanks to Representative Arata and the other sponsors of this bill and to the committee for your diligent work. I'm happy to answer any questions that you have now or in the future.