



Rachel Talbot Ross
Senator, District 28

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross introducing
**LD 1805, “An Act to Establish a Post-conviction Review Process for Crimes
Committed by Victims of Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation”**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
May 12, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Senator Rachel Talbot Ross, and I proudly represent Senate District 28, which includes part of my hometown of Portland and Peaks Island. I am here today to present LD 1805, “An Act to Establish a Post-conviction Review Process for Crimes Committed by Victims of Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation.”

Almost exactly six years ago, Representative Lois Reckitt, a lifelong advocate in Maine’s movement to end gender-based violence, stood before this Committee to present legislation aimed at providing criminal record relief to sex trafficking survivors. She called upon the Legislature to recognize these convictions for what they truly are — unjust convictions of crime victims — and to respond accordingly. However, like many other bills proposing criminal record relief at that time, the bill was unanimously voted Ought Not to Pass, and the topic of post-conviction relief for sex trafficking survivors was referred to the Criminal Records Review Committee (CRRC) for further study.

Since that time, I have served as the House Chair of each of the CRRCs, and I am proud to stand before you today to present this bipartisan bill, which was worked on by members of the CRRC and received unanimous support from the committee. If enacted, this bill would finally realize the goal of Representative Reckitt’s original legislation, providing critical relief that is essential to the healing of sex trafficking survivors.

LD 1805 would create a post-conviction review process for victims of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, using Maine’s existing record sealing process as a foundation. This bill would allow survivors to have their criminal convictions sealed if the offense was committed as a substantial result of the trafficking or exploitation they experienced.

Importantly, this bill also makes two significant improvements to the current record sealing law:

- First, it corrects an oversight from the previous legislature, clarifying that the existing process for sealing convictions for the former Class E crime of engaging in prostitution also applies to convictions for the Class D version of that crime. This fully aligns the law with the Legislature’s intent to provide relief for this category of convictions, reflecting the fact that the offense was only recently reduced to a Class E crime after decades as a more severe Class D offense.
- Second, it requires businesses that assemble and sell criminal records to remove records of sealed or pardoned offenses, ensuring that the protections provided by the record sealing process are



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meaningful. Without this requirement, sealed records can continue to create barriers to employment, housing, and other opportunities for survivors.

As of a report released by the Polaris Project, only three states — Alaska, Iowa, and Maine — along with the federal government, do not offer some form of criminal record relief specific to trafficking survivors.¹ This means that 47 other states and the federal government have recognized the need for this essential form of justice. We should not allow Maine to remain an outlier in denying survivors the chance to rebuild their lives without the burden of an unjust criminal record.

I would like to sincerely thank the members of this Committee who have cosponsored this bill, as well as Senator Bennett and Representative Boyer, who served alongside me on the CRRC, for their steadfast support. Their collective advocacy demonstrates that restoring the lives of survivors and ending the criminalization of those who have been sexually exploited, trafficked, and abused is not a partisan issue — it is a human rights matter that we have the power to address.

Finally, I offer you again the words of our former colleague, Representative Reckitt, when she initially brought forward the need for these policies: “The concept of the bill is part of my personal commitment to allow those whose lives have been curtailed by convictions of crimes they were forced to commit. We have a chance today to give these survivors a chance for a future unencumbered by a past that was not of their choosing. I hope you will act to return to them the hope of that future.”

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.

¹ <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Criminal-Record-Relief-for-Trafficking-Survivors-by-Polaris.pdf>