



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 1871, “An Act to Permit Sealing the Criminal History Record Information of
Victims of Sex Trafficking or 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 1871, “An Act to Permit Sealing the Criminal History Record Information of Victims of Sex Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation.”

This bill, developed through the work of the Criminal Records Review Committee (CRRC), provides a critical pathway to justice for survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. It allows them to petition the court to have their criminal history record information sealed if they can demonstrate, by a preponderance of the evidence, that their convictions were a direct result of being trafficked or exploited.

This legislation builds on the foundational work of past efforts, including the initial call for criminal record relief by my colleague, Representative Lois Reckitt, nearly six years ago. At that time, the legislature recognized the need for a more comprehensive approach to addressing the unjust criminalization of survivors, referring the issue to the CRRC for study. The committee took up this charge, examining the experiences of survivors, the legal frameworks in other states, and the barriers that criminal records pose to recovery and reintegration.

The result is this bill, which not only reflects the recommendations of the CRRC but also aligns Maine with the 47 other states and the federal government that already offer some form of criminal record relief to trafficking survivors. According to the Polaris Project, only three states — Alaska, Iowa, and Maine — remain without such protections. Maine should not be an outlier in denying survivors the opportunity to rebuild their lives without the burden of criminal convictions that were not truly their own.

LD 1871 is a recognition that survivors deserve the opportunity to reclaim their lives without being forever defined by the actions they were forced to take under coercion and violence.

I want to sincerely thank the members of this Committee who are cosponsors of this bill, as well as Senator Bennett and Representative Boyer, who served on the CRRC, for their commitment to this issue. Their collective support 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.



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Finally, I would like to close with the words of Representative Reckitt, whose commitment to this cause continues to guide this work: "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 time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.