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Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich presenting

LD 1978, An Act Regarding Government Liability Related to Sexual Acts Toward Minors

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Lori Gramlich. I have the distinct honor of representing House District 131, the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach, and of serving as Assistant House Majority Leader. Thank you for the opportunity to present ***LD 1978, An Act Regarding Government Liability Related to Sexual Acts Toward Minors***.

As many of you know, I was before this committee in the 130th Legislature to present LD 589, An Act To Provide Access to Justice for Victims of Child Sexual Abuse, which was passed through this committee and signed into law by the Governor. While that bill was a critical step toward ensuring justice for sexual abuse survivors, there is more to be done.

This bill, LD 1978, continues this important work. It is more than a legal reform—it is a **moral imperative**.

For far too long, survivors of childhood sexual abuse, especially those whose abusers were protected by institutional systems, have been denied access to justice. Government entities—including schools, juvenile detention centers and other public institutions—have too often failed in their duty to protect children, and worse, in some cases, actively covered up the abuse.

LD 1978 addresses two critical issues:

1. Accountability for Governmental Entities

This bill ensures that governmental bodies can no longer hide behind the cloak of immunity when an employee or agent commits sexual abuse against a minor while acting under the scope or authority of their role. Whether it's a teacher, coach, law enforcement officer or government-contracted worker, the State must be held accountable when it creates or enables the conditions that allow abuse to occur.

2. Eliminating the Statute of Limitations

Perhaps most importantly, this bill recognizes the well-documented reality that survivors of childhood sexual abuse often do not come forward until years or even decades later. The trauma, shame and fear associated with abuse prevent many from seeking justice within an arbitrary legal timeframe. By eliminating the statute of limitations, this bill offers survivors a long-denied opportunity to hold perpetrators and enabling institutions accountable—no matter when the abuse occurred.

Justice delayed should not be justice denied. Governmental entities must not be exempt from the same accountability we would expect of any institution. A school district that ignores red flags about an abusive employee or a juvenile facility that allows misconduct to go unchecked should face consequences.

Many of you have heard my story. As a survivor of sexual abuse, I knew that I could not change my situation as a child, but as an adult, I have worked my entire life to ensure others would not have to endure the trauma of one of the most heinous acts against children.

Survivors deserve their day in court if that is the path they choose for justice, and society deserves the transparency and reckoning that this bill will help bring about.

In closing, I urge you to vote unanimously Ought to Pass for LD 1978 and send a clear message: Maine stands with survivors. Maine will not protect institutions over children. And Maine believes that time should never be a barrier to justice for victims of childhood sexual abuse.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to try to answer any questions.