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*Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich in support of
LD 2168, An Act to Increase Accountability for Persons Engaged in Commercial
Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking and to Support Victims
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary*

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Lori K. Gramlich, and I represent House District 131, which is the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach. I am also honored to serve as Assistant Majority Leader. I am here today as a cosponsor of **LD 2168, An Act to Increase Accountability for Persons Engaged in Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking and to Support Victims.**

Before serving in the Legislature, I spent nearly 40 years working in the social services sector, including work that brought me into close contact with survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation. In those roles, I saw firsthand the lasting and often devastating impacts of sexual violence, trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Survivors frequently face profound trauma, financial instability, housing insecurity, and long-term physical and mental health needs. Too often, the systems meant to support them are under-resourced and unable to fully meet those needs.

This bill represents a clear and thoughtful step toward addressing that imbalance. By imposing a modest additional assessment on individuals convicted of serious sex crimes—including sex trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and exploitation of individuals with disabilities—this legislation ensures that accountability is meaningfully tied to survivor support. The funds generated by these assessments are directed to the Victims' Compensation Fund and dedicated specifically to meeting the needs of victims and survivors of these crimes.

Importantly, this bill recognizes both accountability and fairness. The assessment increases for repeat offenders, reflecting the seriousness of continued harm, while also allowing courts to waive all or part of the assessment based on a person's ability to pay. This balanced approach reinforces responsibility without creating unworkable financial burdens.

From my experience working with survivors, as well as my own lived experiences as a survivor, I know that access to compensation can be the difference between stability and continued crisis.

Assistance with medical care, counseling, housing and other basic needs can help survivors begin to heal and reclaim control over their lives. This bill ensures that those who cause harm contribute directly to addressing its consequences.

Commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking are not victimless crimes. They rely on coercion, abuse and vulnerability. This legislation sends a clear message that Maine will hold offenders accountable while standing firmly with survivors.

I urge the committee to vote an ought to pass for this bill and help strengthen Maine's commitment to justice, accountability and survivor-centered care.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.