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portland

LD 1592 An Act to Decriminalize Engaging in Prostitution, Strengthen the Laws against CSE and Allow a Person Convicted of Engaging in Prostitution to Petition the Court to Expunge the Record of Conviction

Honorable Susan Deschambault, Senet Chair - honorable Charlotte Warren, House Chair – Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good Afternoon,

My name is Dee Clarke. I am a survivor and executive director of Survivor Speak USA. I have concerns with repealing 17-A MRS 853 – A: “Engaging in prostitution”. Everything I know about today’s and yesterday’s pimps/traffickers is what I am basing my concerns on. As well as all I know and continue to see in women caught up in the life of engaging in prostitution; regardless of why. Many survivors have boyfriends who are not considered traffickers, yet they benefit and are ok with her prostituting

Repealing engaging in prostitution will harm more than it will help. Young girls are easily swayed by false promises of love and a better life. Women in relationships that are grounded in coercive controls will be reminded that they don’t have to worry about being arrested for prostitution. Maine will become a spot for traffickers.

SSUSA supports changing Solicitation of a child to engage in prostitution from a misdemeanor to a felony.

We also support increasing the penalty of engaging a prostitute from a class E to a class D. SSUSA hopes that there will be real comprehensive services that will support a survivor from “discovery to recovery”. That is SSUSA’s goal when we meet survivors. We don’t throw them out. We stick by them especially when they are so vulnerable. We know the difficulty of assisting survivors who have so many layers of needs including mental health, physical health; including living with a pic, and substance use disorders. At one point this bill included services for survivors. EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

SSUSA tried to bring vacature to the table for survivors to have “all their records” not just prostitution vacated. It did not pass.

Sealing of a prostitution record is helpful.

Committee members please consider passing this bill EXCLUDING decriminalization/repealing of engaging in prostitution. However put use to LD1455 An Act To Support Survivors of Sex Trafficking and Exploitation that gives a defense to prostitution. Rep Reckitt and those who helped you create this bill. Thank you for your efforts.