

Kathy Maitland  
Michigan Abolitionist Project

My name is Kathy Maitland and I am testifying in support of LD1592

I am the Executive Director of the Michigan Abolitionist Project, an anti-human trafficking organization that has been addressing human trafficking for nearly ten years. I am testifying and hopeful that this important legislation in Maine will be a beacon for the rest of our country to follow.

I personally know many human trafficking survivors and have learned of hundreds of heart-wrenching stories of the abuse and torture that these victims and survivors have endured from buyers and exploiters.

I believe we can take steps to eliminate the instances of trauma and harm against those in the commercial sex trade and decrease demand from buyers and exploiters by implementing legislation like LD1592 - which is known as the Equality Model or partial decriminalization . Under this approach individuals who are bought and sold are protected from arrest and prosecution, but their buyers or exploiters are held accountable.

Human trafficking is a complex issue and I am supportive of the way the "Equality Model" works to address some of the many complexities. Specifically working to close those "on-ramps " into the sex trade like lack of employment, affordable housing and substance abuse. At the same time providing "offramps" for those who feel trapped and do not see their way out. It is so important to invest in treatment for addiction and mental health, transitional housing, basic needs and job opportunities.

I believe if we provide effective ways to exit out of the sex industry, while maintaining prohibitions against the act of purchasing sex acts, the demand for the sex trade will decrease. Decreasing demand is how to ensure health and safety of so many victims and people at-risk.

I urge you to support LD1592. This approach is supported by survivors of sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation nationwide.