

STATE OF MAINE

Andrew S. Robinson
District Attorney



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May 12, 2021

Hon. Senator Deschambault
Hon. Representative Warren
Joint Standing Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

Re: LD 1592 An Act to Decriminalize Engaging in Prostitution, Strengthen the Laws against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Allow a Person Convicted of Engaging in Prostitution To Petition the Court to Expunge the Record of Conviction.

I am writing in support of LD 1592 *An Act to Decriminalize Engaging in Prostitution, Strengthen the Laws against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Allow a Person Convicted of Engaging in Prostitution To Petition the Court to Expunge the Record of Conviction*. This bill would adopt a form of the "Equality Model," which has gained the support of a vast number of survivors and sex trafficking advocacy organizations across the country.

The bill before you would acknowledge that people who are caught up in the nightmare circumstances of human trafficking and sexual exploitation are *victims*. Under this legislation, buying sex would remain illegal in Maine, and this bill increases the penalties. However, we would no longer be utilizing the criminal justice system as a means to provide access to services for people who engage in prostitution. The concept that we should arrest people and bring them into the criminal justice system to gain access to services is backwards. A better model to embrace would be to provide services to individuals to *prevent* their involvement in the criminal justice system in the first place. An arrest can have a negative impact on an individual's life, regardless of whether or not there is a conviction. This legislation recognizes that a victim should be treated as a victim, and not as a criminal.

I am deeply concerned about human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. I have a dedicated human trafficking prosecutor for just this reason. My office is committed to fighting against this evil by targeting demand. The people who create the victims are the ones paying for sex and they are the ones who should be subjected to the criminal justice system. A robust law enforcement response to fight buying sex partnered with a State sponsored network of services to support victims is the path forward that we should work towards, which is why I am in support of LD 1592.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andrew S. Robinson".

Andrew S. Robinson
District Attorney for District 3