

Statement in support of Bill LD 1592

To the members of the State of Maine's Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

My name is Sarah Trombley, I am a survivor of sexual violence, prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). I am currently in a residential treatment home founded by survivors of the like. I am here today to oppose Maine House Bill LD 1592 to fully decriminalize the sex trade in Maine.

I have stated that I am a survivor of CSE as well as so much violence while living the life of being prostituted at the hands of so many. This life has been an ongoing struggle for many painful years. Not only did I have to sell access to my body for a place to stay, to buy a sandwich or even just because I needed to take a shower, but I was made to feel like an object by the men in my life who were supposed to be the ones that were protecting me. Abusive relationships, one after the other. It had been the men I thought loved me that forced me onto the streets to sell my body. However, the ones that "loved" me were never the ones charged with any crimes, but I was. Why was that? These boyfriends were sexually exploiting me. These boyfriends were forcing me to sell my body and were getting away scot-free. These boyfriends were in fact my pimps and knew I was getting arrested for these things. But, did these pimps know that those arrests, charges and convictions are going to stay with me for the rest of my life? Pimps don't care. And pimps sure as hell never cared about me. They got what they wanted, I was disposable and so they threw me away.

I have been raped, I have been beaten and I have been held against my will. All of these things happened to me and they happened by the hands of men who thought it was alright. They were providing something in return, so what was the problem? The problem is that I am not alright. Not only was I being punished for these men having access to my body, but they are free to go home to their families with no repercussions. These are the ones who need the punishment. The people who are trafficking women, men and children. The ones who are buying and selling access to the bodies of others. Those of us who have been thrown into the world of prostitution

don't like these sex buyers. We are scared. We do not have a choice. We do what we have to do to survive, not because we enjoy it. These buyers, traffickers and pimps have a choice. Please, consider the hurt and the pain that we have already been through. Justice needs to be served to the ones causing all of this hurt and pain.

Fortunately, I found myself a way out of the abusive relationship I was in (this time) and I have found a safe and stable place for myself. With my family taking care of my daughter, I am in the best place I could ever be. A program for women exiting the life of prostitution. Is that a thing? I actually do know of one place that offers this kind of support. I live there. I am receiving the treatment I need to try and deal with all of the trauma I have been through. There is almost nothing out there for those prostituted to find a safe place to receive the support and general understanding of being prostituted. I am one of the lucky ones. There are others out here that have been in the same shoes as me and have found a way out. How unfortunate this is, though. So many people are out there living the life of violence and being sexually trafficked without anywhere to go. The government is not providing the funding needed to open up more places like the one that I live in. This home has saved my life, and the women who have opened this place are the real angels. These women know what it is like to be stuck in that life and just want to help others get out. I want to be one of those women and have an opportunity to open another place like this in the future. But, how could myself or anyone else for that matter be able to do so if there is no funding. There needs to be more support. I ask of you to see the capabilities that programs allowing sexually trafficked and those prostituted would have. For those to have a safe and stable environment to live in.

I am asking you all to please consider helping women like me to be able to get our lives back. I am working so hard to change the past, but the past is following me. I can't get away because these arrests and charges are still there, haunting me. Please help me and other survivors to be able to have

our records expunged. I would like to get a good job. I would love to buy a home for my 3 year old daughter and myself. I am currently trying to get my own apartment for us and my CORI is preventing that because of those charges. My family is great at taking care of my daughter temporarily, but she needs to be raised by her mother.

I am getting my life back. I have dignity and respect for myself. This is why I am here today. Please stand with me and other survivors to oppose this bill.