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Testimony in Support of

Submitted by: Casey Mae Bernardini

Date: April 14, 2025

To: Chairperson and Members of the Committee

My name is Casey, and I am a survivor of human trafficking—I am writing today in strong support.

I believe it is important to recognize that survivors face both mental health and physical health consequences after experiencing human trafficking and sexual assault. It is important that this is recognized when asking or wondering “ why did you not come forward sooner?”

That is why we are here today, and even if nobody asks the question” Why did you not come forward sooner?”, they don't necessarily have to, because our current law states it. Expanding the statute of limitations past 6 years will give justice to those victimized and help keep the state of Maine a safer place.

In most cases in order for a survivor to feel safe enough to come forward they must be both emotionally and physically safe.

From the first days stretching to many years a survivor may experience a wide range of emotions and psychological symptoms like .Depression, Anxiety, Dissociation and

dissociative disorders, Substance use and abuse, Self-esteem and self-worth, Trust and intimacy issues, Sleep disturbances, Eating disorders.

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One of the most common and long-lasting consequences of sexual assault is PTSD. Survivors may experience intrusive memories or flashbacks of the assault and persistent fear. PTSD can significantly impair a person's ability to function in daily life and maintain healthy relationships.

A survivor experiencing PTSD may struggle for years. At the point a survivor gains safety, and safe relationships and feels they are ready to take actions, the Maine State statute of limitations responds with " why did you not come forward sooner ? ."

When I was saved from my trafficking situation I was lucky enough to be supported by Homeland Security and both state and federal law enforcement. However my second time that I was trafficked I have stored this information away for years. Putting back together the pieces of my life , and reuniting with my family set the president over reporting the people who trafficked me. Sadly I know I am not alone in this. I ask you today to support expanding the statute of limitations.

I thank you for your time today, and in listening to why I support 1427 An Act Extending the Statute Limitations on Criminal Actions Involving Aggravated Sex Trafficking.

Sincerely,

Casey Bernardini



I faced endless barriers: struggling to find safe housing, and dealing with the emotional aftermath of what I'd been through while still having to function like everything was fine.

It recognizes the need for real, structural changes—whether that means access to trauma-informed services, better protection in legal processes, or funding for survivor-centered resources. These are not luxuries. They are lifelines.

Every survivor's story is different, some of us are assisted by rescues by law enforcement while others find the courage to leave, we won't be left to fend for ourselves in a system that often retraumatizes us. SB 267 moves New Hampshire closer to being a state where survivors are not just heard—but supported.

Thank you for your time and for considering the voices of survivors.

Sincerely,

Casey Bernardini

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