

LD 1805 LD1871 LD1856 "Second Chance at Life"

May 9th, 2025

Senator Carney , Representative Moonen and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee

In the fall of 2015, I found myself in the backseat sitting next to other girls like myself. We did not know where we would be going next. My trafficker brought us from state to state and from hotel to hotel. It was my parents who got in touch with law enforcement. I remember the day a high-speed chase ended with me being arrested. I had a warrant out for a theft charge from weeks prior.. I remember that day like yesterday, I was happy to have that orange jail uniform on because that felt like heaven compared to the prior 4 months with my trafficker. I eventually was released to a safe house in Massachusetts and I testified against my trafficker. I Was reunited with my family. However, 10 years later, it is still the best day of my life because I was rescued, but the worst day of my life because this criminal record has followed me.

People have asked me what was the worst part, physical or emotional? I tell them the healing. I can control panic attacks, there is medicine for my ptsd, there is therapy for my flashbacks. But I cannot control the charge on my record. A charge that affects housing, higher education, jobs and careers, my child's field trips? I can not control the language used to describe that exact opposite of the human I am. But,yet language does affect my life every day. I ask you whether democrat, republican, father, mother to see me as human. To see that I have been through enough abuse. Please support this bill and please vote "ought to pass" and help support Maine's survivors.

This post-conviction review process would allow survivors like me to finally clear our names and begin to heal without the weight of a record that doesn't tell the whole story.

We are not asking for pity. We are asking for justice. For a process that sees us as human beings who were exploited and who deserve to rebuild our lives without shame or stigma.

Survivors need a path to clear their names. Not because we want to erase the past—but because we want to be seen for who we truly are. I along with many others have survived unimaginable circumstances and are working every day to build new lives. A post-conviction review process recognizes this truth. It offers hope. It offers justice. It offers freedom.

We urge you to pass this bill, not just for the survivors who are speaking out—but for those who are still too afraid to. For those still carrying the burden of crimes they never should have been held responsible for. And for those who are still waiting to be seen as victims—and not criminals.

Thank you for your time, your compassion, and your commitment to justice.