

Testimony of Tami Brown Rodriquez

Director of Policy, Jaco Booyens Ministries
Family Member of a Survivor
In Support of LD 1877
Maine Judiciary Committee | 2025

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Tami Brown Rodriquez. I serve as the Director of Policy for Jaco Booyens Ministries, a national organization that works in more than 20 states to advance legislation that protects children from exploitation. I've had the privilege of working directly with the sponsor of LD 1877 to shape this bill in a way that respects Maine's unique judicial culture and prosecutorial realities.

I am here in strong support of LD 1877 because Maine needs stronger tools to hold traffickers accountable and protect victims. But I also want to speak with care and honesty about one of the concerns I've heard—mandatory minimum sentencing.

I understand that concern. I know Maine is a state that values nuance, discretion, and justice that reflects individual circumstances. And I share the desire to avoid unintended harm to vulnerable populations. That's why we've approached this bill thoughtfully.

What I would suggest for your consideration—and what LD 1877 could further emphasize—is this: let's apply enhanced minimums specifically to cases involving the trafficking of children.

Why? Because under both state and federal law, when the victim is a minor, prosecutors do not need to prove force, fraud, or coercion. The very act of trafficking a child is per se exploitation. That's where we can draw a moral and legal line—and do so with confidence.

Across the country, states are making that distinction:

- In Texas, trafficking a child carries a 25-year mandatory minimum.
- In Georgia, it's 10 to 20 years.
- Florida imposes up to 30 years, and they don't require proof of coercion for minors.

Right now, Maine has no mandatory minimum sentence for trafficking a child. That means someone who sells a child—who profits from a child's trauma—could receive little more than a plea deal or suspended sentence. That is not justice.

I'm not here to push a one-size-fits-all solution. I'm here to offer a Maine-specific framework that protects children without compromising fairness. LD 1877 achieves that—and gives prosecutors the leverage they need to pursue meaningful convictions.

As a family member of a survivor who was trafficked for over a decade, I can tell you that the failure to act boldly has a cost. I urge you to move this bill forward, and to ensure that Maine's laws reflect the seriousness of the crimes committed against our most vulnerable.

Thank you.