

**Testimony in support of LD 1871
to the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary**

May 12, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.

I am writing in support of LD 1871 An Act to Permit Sealing Criminal History Record Information of Victims of Sex Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation.

I appreciate the sponsors for crafting a bill with specific protections for victims in both the realm of sealing access to criminal records and also with oversight to ensure records that are accessible are accurate and that there is a process for disputing their accuracy.

As noted by a 2019 US State Department report, [protecting victims from wrongful prosecution and further victimization is required to also protect civilian security, democracy and human rights](#). *“For years, the Trafficking in Persons Report has detailed the importance of protecting victims of human trafficking throughout the law enforcement process. A criminal record can have a profoundly negative effect on victims throughout their lives. Even if a trafficking victim never faces charges, or if charges are dropped, arrest records and stigma remain, affecting where victims live, their employment opportunities, and how others perceive them.”*

Recently New Jersey passed the [Human Trafficking Prevention, Protection, and Treatment Act](#). As noted by “[Volunteer Lawyers for Justice](#)” of New Jersey, *“The Act makes it possible for survivors of human trafficking to clear their criminal record related to their trafficking, improving their opportunities, quality of life. There is more to this issue than just the shame and injustice of carrying a criminal record from a period of victimization. Criminal records carry consequences that reach far beyond the trafficking experience: survivors may find themselves cut out of jobs, education, housing, public entitlements, and immigration relief due to their criminal record. Although the trafficking event could have taken place years or even decades in the past, a criminal record lingers, serving as both barrier and reminder long after the trafficking experience has ended.”* LD 1871 will also improve opportunities and quality of life.

Access to criminal records are particularly harmful to victims. People may avoid seeking opportunities in fear of being reoffended by the review of these records. It benefits everyone when people are supported in rebuilding their lives. LD1871 does that, and I hope you will support it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson, Sanford, Maine

<https://www.vljinj.org/pro-bono-blog/clearing-human-trafficking>

<https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/humantrafficking/downloads/HT-Prevention-Protection-Treatment-Act.pdf>