

BILL NO: LD 1805 / SP 705
TITLE: **An Act to Establish a Post-conviction Review Process for Crimes Committed by Victims of Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation**
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
DATE: May 12, 2025
POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chairperson Carney and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding testimony on LD 1805 / SP 705, legislation that addresses the harmful and lasting collateral consequences of unjust criminalization endured by survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Shared Hope International is a non-profit organization committed to preventing child and youth sex trafficking, restoring the lives of survivors, and ensuring justice is served. For over 25 years, we have worked in Maine, across the United States, and internationally to support comprehensive legal reforms that protect survivors, hold traffickers accountable, and prevent trafficking before it starts.

As of 2024, **at least 44 states and Washington, D.C. have enacted some form of post-conviction relief law for trafficking survivors**—recognizing that individuals who were coerced into unlawful acts should not carry criminal records for actions that were the direct result of their victimization. **Maine remains one of the last states in the nation without such a law.** That reality is deeply concerning, and this Committee now has the opportunity—and the responsibility—to correct it.

LD 1805 / SP 705 recognizes a painful but well-established truth: trafficking survivors are often forced, manipulated, or threatened into engaging in illegal conduct. These unjust convictions follow survivors for years, denying them access to stable housing, employment, education, and safety. These barriers not only punish survivors, but also undermine their long-term healing and reintegration. In effect, their criminal records continue the cycle of victimization.

This bill offers a path forward. It permits a survivor to file a motion for post-conviction relief when they can show, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the offense was a substantial result of their trafficking or exploitation. This is a balanced, survivor-centered approach that restores agency and dignity while aligning Maine law with the national and bipartisan consensus on how trafficking victims should be treated.

LD 1805 / SP 705 is not radical—it is overdue. The fact that Maine has yet to provide post-conviction relief to survivors of trafficking places the state behind nearly every other jurisdiction in the country. Every day without this legal remedy is another day that survivors in Maine are denied justice that their peers in 44 other states already have.

Passing LD 1805 / SP 705 is both a moral and legal imperative. It is a chance to reject unjust criminalization, honor the resilience of survivors, and ensure that no one in Maine is forever defined by crimes they were forced to commit while being trafficked.

We urge this Committee to vote yes on LD 1805 / SP 705 and finally provide survivors in Maine with the relief and recognition they deserve.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to justice.

Sincerely,
Sidney E. McCoy, Esq.
Director of Advocacy

For questions or additional information:
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