



Preble Street

Turning Hunger and Homelessness into Opportunity and Hope

May 16th, 2025

Florence House

Huston Commons

Logan Place

Anti-Trafficking Services

Healing Center

Veterans Housing Service

Rapid Re-Housing

Emergency Food Program

Teen Center

Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter

First Place

Street Outreach Collaborative

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United Way
of
Greater Portland

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

My name is Hailey Virusso, and I serve as the Director of Anti-Trafficking Services at Preble Street; I am submitting testimony on behalf of Preble Street, a statewide social work agency providing accessible barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger and poverty. Preble Street's Anti-Trafficking program was established in 2013 and has served roughly 1,000 survivors of both labor and sex trafficking throughout the state of Maine.

Preble Street supports LD 1871, An Act to Permit Sealing Criminal History Record Information of Victims of Sex Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation.

Criminalization of trafficking survivors hinders their ability to exit a victimization, with criminal records creating barriers to safe, stable, and affordable housing, economic opportunities with upward mobility, reunification with their children, and limit the ways in which survivors can engage in their communities. When survivors are coerced to engage in illegal activity, the term used is "forced criminality," which provides language to a widely misunderstood and deeply stigmatized form of human trafficking.

Coerced criminal acts are the great silencer of victims of trafficking; traffickers can effectively leverage these acts to further exploit a victim of trafficking for their own economic gain. When the only contact a survivor has had with the criminal legal system is their own arrest, a path to justice through this system becomes unlikely.

The passage of LD 1871 creates opportunities for a survivor to take ownership of their own story – and to free themselves of experiences they never should have been held accountable for. LD 1871 ensures survivors have access to the necessary resources that all people need to flourish.

For these reasons, we support LD 1871 and urge you to do the same. Thank you for your consideration.

