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Chairpersons and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Justin Euteneier, and I serve with Epik Project, an organization dedicated to disrupting the demand for commercial sexual exploitation and raising up a generation of men who will not buy sex. I'm here today in support of LD 2168, *"An Act to Increase Accountability for Persons Engaged in Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking and to Support Victims."*

Epik works on the demand side of trafficking. Since 2013, my team and our network of volunteers have spoken directly with thousands of men who were attempting to buy sex. We meet them right at that moment and invite them into accountability, education, and community instead of secrecy and denial.

Survivors of trafficking remind us that if we're not confronting demand, we're not truly fighting trafficking. As long as men are willing to pay, someone will exploit the vulnerable to meet that demand. Demand reduction must go beyond slogans—it requires real accountability for buyers, survivor-informed funding for victim services, and education that makes buying sex socially unacceptable. Survivor voices must help shape how LD 2168 is implemented.

Through this work, we've seen that trafficking isn't just a criminal issue; it's sustained by demand, and that demand is shaped by deeper social and cultural forces. Many of the men we meet are not hardened criminals but individuals who are lonely, disconnected, and confused about healthy masculinity, relationships, and sexuality. Addressing those roots is essential if we truly want to reduce demand.

We strongly support the bill's increased financial penalties—\$500 for a first conviction and \$1,000 for repeat offenses—as a meaningful step toward accountability. But we also know that punishment alone won't change behavior. If all we do is penalize, the problem just goes underground. Real change happens when consequences come with opportunities for restoration and learning.

At Epik, we've seen that men can change when they participate in survivor-informed education programs that expose the human cost of exploitation and help them rethink their beliefs about entitlement, consent, and connection. Accountability paired with restoration is what actually reduces demand over time.

So as you consider LD 2168, I urge you to advance it—and to pair it with strategies that are survivor-informed, restorative, and focused on prevention. If we want to end trafficking, we cannot settle only for short term measures, we must implement comprehensive solutions that recognize the real roots of demand.

On behalf of the hundred of men who are actively fighting to end demand, thank you for your time and for your commitment to protecting the vulnerable through accountability, restoration, and real cultural change.

Sincerely,

Justin Euteneier
Director of Programs