

February 3, 2026

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

My name is Quinn Gormley. I am a former sex worker, and I have been involved in sex worker advocacy here in Maine for more than a decade in various capacities. I am writing today to oppose LD 2168, *An Act to Increase Accountability for Persons Engaged in Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking and to Support Victims*.

I want to begin by naming the primary shared value in this room: a belief in the worth and dignity of people experiencing trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, and a deep desire to fight for them and keep them safe. I do not question that motivation. But that shared value can — and often does — lead people of good faith to different conclusions about what approaches actually create safety.

This was especially clear in 2023, when Maine became something of a laboratory. When this committee passed LD 1435, it created a carefully negotiated compromise framework between enforcement-based “end demand” approaches and human-rights-based approaches to sex work.

That compromise did not come easily. It was reached under the leadership of the late Representative Lois Galgay Reckitt.

Lois and I disagreed passionately about the best approach to sex work policy. Like many of you, she wanted to see abusive men held accountable for harm. I do too. But what distinguished Lois was that she also valued evidence and diverse input. When partners she had worked with for decades came to her expressing concern about enforcement mechanisms and unintended consequences, she listened. She challenged us. She fought with us. But she also trusted our values and intent. She brought people with deeply different views into the same room and insisted on finding a path forward that we could all live with.

The result is the framework Maine has today.

Maine’s approach to sex work criminalization is a compromise. It is neither a full enforcement-based or “Nordic model,” nor a full human-rights-based decriminalization model. What we agreed on was this: decriminalizing the seller side of the equation was the right thing to do. Some came to that conclusion because they view all sellers as victims. Others because they believe in respecting the dignity and autonomy of consenting adults. But we went there together.

At the same time, we agreed to disagree about buyers. Buying sex remained illegal, but we did not layer on new punitive measures.

In doing so, Lois made Maine a test case. To my knowledge, we are the first jurisdiction globally to intentionally try this specific model, and the first U.S. state to pursue decriminalization in any form. This law is young. Its implementation, including record sealing pathways, has been underfunded and poorly communicated, slowing meaningful rollout. **There is ongoing research into its efficacy, but we do not yet have the data needed to evaluate its outcomes honestly.**

To change course now, before we understand whether this framework is working, would undermine both the opportunity and the responsibility Maine has taken on. Evidence-based policymaking requires time. It requires listening to the people most impacted. And it requires the discipline to resist the urge to act before we have the information to act wisely.

What Maine does here matters beyond our borders. As is so often the case, Maine is leading the nation. To lead effectively, we need good data. And to get good data, we need more time without destabilizing the system we have only just begun to build.

To do otherwise would not only be premature — it would dishonor the careful, inclusive, and principled work of Representative Lois Galgay Reckitt.

Thank you for your time and consideration.