

Barbara Patch  
All Girls Allowed, NH Traffick-free Coalition  
LD 2168

Chairman, members of the committee, I'm a resident of Merrimack, NH, the Director of All Girls Allowed, and the Policy Advocate for the NH Traffick Free Coalition.

The organizations I serve fight sexual exploitation every day. Wherever anyone is buying sex, exploitation and trafficking are rampant. Prostituted people are often under the control of others and operate out of fear or need.

Buying sex isn't like buying a product. However, many buyers see it that way. They ignore the human being in front of them and pay for time with a body. What they do with that body may shock you:

- Many buyers inflict physical violence such as sexual abuse, rape, gang rape, and severe beatings, including battery when a prostituted person refuses a demand or lacks enthusiasm.

- 92% of women in the sex trade report being raped, shot, strangled, burned, beaten, stabbed, or punched.

- Prostituted women report being urinated, defecated and ejaculated upon, forced to have unprotected sex, and subjected to the insertion of foreign objects into their bodies.

- And yet they cannot speak up or fight back, because their traffickers & pimps "punish" girls who get bad reviews on "John boards"

- 68% of prostituted people meet the criteria for PTSD at levels as severe as those suffered by combat veterans and victims of state torture.

Yet in most areas, prostituted people are arrested far more often than buyers, even as many as 9X more often. Due to the violence they inflict, we believe the punishment for buyers should be more severe.

Prostituted people bear the brunt of legal and societal consequences, while buyers largely enjoy impunity and anonymity. We refer to buyers with the respectable name of "John," but we demean and shame prostituted people with labels like slut and whore. Prostituted people are often trafficked people, and they face jail sentences and severe financial challenges trying to exit the life. They need assistance and help navigating the significant obstacles.

We beseech Maine leaders to recognize the disparities here and provide greater accountability for buyers along with hope for survivors. LD2168 will help the state of Maine and surrounding states in several ways:

- 1.Higher fines & consequences have been shown to Reduce Demand!
- 2.Lower demand will Reduce Sex Trafficking!
- 3.The critical funding generated will assist survivors in exiting or escaping their circumstances and finding stability.

Please pass LD 2168! Thank you!