

Hello, my name is Simone Diamond.

I am a resident of Providence, Rhode Island, and I have personal experience working legally in the sex industry. I am currently a PhD candidate at Harvard University and hold advanced degrees in religious studies from Temple University and Syracuse University. I would like to show my very strong support for RI Immunity Bill H7165 & Loitering Repeal H7452.

I consider these bills steps in the right direction toward safer and more equitable legislation regarding the human rights of sex workers. It is my firm belief that the full decriminalization of consensual adult sex work is the only way to protect the physical safety and human rights of all people who interact with and are affected by the sex industry in any way - a group that includes not just sex workers but truthfully every citizen of the United States in some way or another.

Furthermore, the only way to protect trafficking victims and create safe and viable alternatives for those wishing to leave the industry is through the decriminalization of consensual adult sex work.

Without a doubt, someone you love or perhaps you yourself have been a sex worker or enjoyed the services of a sex worker at some point. Proximity to the sex industry is something we all share and we all have interest in making this industry safer for everyone. I understand that many people conflate consensual adult sex work with human trafficking and the sexual abuse of children. I would like to vehemently oppose this dangerous misunderstanding.

Many adults choose to enter the sex industry or hire the services of sex workers for a variety of reasons. These people are not traffickers and abusers and their safety and human rights must be protected. The only way to do this is through the full decriminalization of consensual adult sex work.

As a survivor of childhood sexual trauma myself, I am intimately familiar with the long standing consequences of assault. I am also painfully aware that such abuse happens in a wide range of settings as the man who molested me was my science teacher in one of the best public school districts in suburban New Jersey. Despite the prevalence of abuse, I do not see a solution to the problem of sexual violence in abolishing the societal institutions that include abusers- whether those institutions be schools, religious organizations, families, the sex industry, or any other. And I firmly believe that punishing the victims of such abuse by criminalizing them is never the solution.

Instead, I believe the only way to seek justice for survivors of rape and sexual assault and to prevent such offenses in the future, we need a wholesale cultural reckoning in the areas of consent, gender, sexual orientation, and the fundamental human rights of children. Of course, this is a lofty goal, but one I believe is worth fighting for.

In the meantime, punishing adults who engage in the consensual buying and selling of sexual services does nothing to save children from exploitation or end the abuses of traffickers. We all know that the demand for paid sexual services has never been assuaged in any time or place, and likely never will be, so attempts to end demand will remain ineffective at best.

The criminalization of consensual adult sex work only serves to further push perpetrators of trafficking, violence, and child exploitation underground while making the livelihoods of countless others infinitely more dangerous. If you truly want to work toward the liberation of trafficking victims and the protection of innocent children, you have no choice but to support the only legislation conducive to such aims- the full decriminalization of consensual adult sex work.

RI Immunity Bill H7165 & Loitering Repeal H7452 are a step in the right direction. Thank you for considering my testimony.