

Roberta DiMezza

From: Lance Nelson <lmn2157@columbia.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2025 3:58 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: RE: Support for H5348 / H5357 / H5358

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To the House Judiciary Committee,

I would like to express my strong support of H5348, H5357, and H5358, three bills that make amendments to Rhode Island's Commercial Sexual Activity statutes in order to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of sex workers and survivors of human trafficking. All three of these bills ensure that people in the sex trade (whether by choice, circumstance, or force, fraud, or coercion) are able to access critical services without being further marginalized and burdened by unnecessary criminalization.

Regarding H5348, it is my understanding that the Rhode Island law in which H5348 would amend was promulgated in 1988, four years prior to the creation of the first rapid HIV test. The legal argument of the time was that the state's police powers allow for mandatory HIV testing of an individual in order to protect public health. However, this law has long been inconsistent with scientific advancements and research in HIV prevention, testing, and care, as well as the [CDC's 2006 guidance](#) that HIV testing should be opt-out and voluntary. It also calls into question Fourteenth Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution.

It is my belief, as a public health student, that HIV and STI testing services should be provided in spaces that ensure informed consent, privacy, and autonomy, and respect the decision-making relationship between a patient and their healthcare provider. This is why other states have been amending such laws.

I greatly appreciate the Committee's consideration, and hope to see the state continue moving forward to protect the well-being and equal rights of all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your time,
Lance Nelson
Providence, RI