

April 9, 2026,

Thank you, Members of the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee, for taking the time to consider testimony on this important piece of legislation.

On behalf of Stacy's Joy Incorporated, a survivor-founded and survivor-led nonprofit organization serving individuals impacted by human trafficking, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, substance use, and reentry, I write in **strong opposition to HB 8057**.

At Stacy's Joy Incorporated, our work is rooted in lived experience, direct service, and community-based engagement across some of the most vulnerable populations. We work daily with individuals who have endured exploitation, coercion, and systemic neglect. From this perspective, we must be clear: policies that move toward full decriminalization of prostitution without addressing demand and exploitation do not protect survivors—they place them at greater risk.

HB 8057, while perhaps well-intended, fails to account for the realities we see on the ground.

Exploitation is not simply a matter of choice, it is often the result of trauma, coercion, survival needs, substance use disorders, housing instability, and manipulation through grooming tactics. Many individuals involved in the sex trade are navigating complex vulnerabilities that are frequently overlooked in policy discussions that frame this issue solely through autonomy.

From our direct experience, full decriminalization:

- Expands demand, increasing the number of individuals being recruited, groomed, and exploited
- Creates greater access for buyers, often with little accountability
- Blurs the line between consensual participation and exploitation, making it harder to identify and support victims
- Disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, including women of color, individuals experiencing poverty, and those with histories of trauma

We must ask ourselves: Who benefits from this legislation?

Because from where we stand, it is not the individuals we serve.

Survivors consistently share that what they needed was not a system that normalized their exploitation, but one that recognized their vulnerability, intervened early, and offered real pathways out including housing, treatment, employment support, and trauma-informed care.

At Stacy's Joy Incorporated, we believe in:

- **Ending demand** for commercial sexual exploitation
- **Holding buyers and exploiters accountable**
- **Providing survivor-centered, trauma-informed services**
- **Investing in prevention, outreach, and long-term support**

HB 8057 moves us in the opposite direction.

We cannot legislate in a way that unintentionally strengthens systems of exploitation while weakening our ability to protect those most at risk. True progress requires us to listen to survivors, understand the complexities of exploitation, and enact policies that reduce harm, not expand it.

We respectfully urge this Committee to **oppose HB 8057** and instead support legislation that prioritizes accountability, prevention, and comprehensive care for survivors.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals and communities.

Respectfully,

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