

**Testimony on Rhode Island House Bill 8057  
(Position: Against)**

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My name is Michael Shively, and I am a Senior Advisor to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation and to Street Grace, and a member of New Englanders Against Sexual Exploitation. For more than 35 years I have conducted crime victimization research and evaluations of criminal justice law and policy. For more than 20 years I had a continuous series of eight grants from the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. State Department to conduct research on exactly the issues addressed by Rhode Island House Bill 8057, including studies of commercial sex policy, sex trafficking victimization and prevalence, and the motivations and traits of human traffickers and the criminal enterprises they operate. I have traveled to Rhode Island today as a neighbor who knows that the commercial sex market is not contained by borders, and that we all have a stake in seeking justice.

*Decades of conducting and reviewing thousands of studies about the sex trade in the U.S. and around the world lead to strongly oppose this bill.*

**I would urge you not to be distracted by a tiny but vocal special interest group seeking this bill's approval, and listen instead to the residents, businesses, and survivors of the sex trade who all want prostitution to end.**

**The demand for prostitution and trafficked sex is extremely strong in Rhode Island, and generates great harm.** Just this week, Street Grace posted just one advertisement on just one website used for commercial sex in Rhode Island. In just 13 hours in Providence, 156 unique individuals responded and exchanged over 3,700 messages in their efforts to buy sex. In Warwick, 94 men responded in less than 7 hours, exchanging over 2,200 messages.

Location	Dates	Duration (hours)	# Sex Buyers Responding	# Messages Exchanged
<b>Rhode Island</b>				
Providence	April 2-3	13	156	3,704
Warwick	April 6	6.5	94	2,245

**That is the tip of the iceberg.** There are **more than 100 websites with Rhode Island listings** on which commercial sex is solicited, in addition to **hundreds of additional in-person venues** used to conduct prostitution and sex trafficking (a list is appended provided below).

**The harm of this immense activity is well documented and admitted by sex trade representatives.** The question is what to do about it.

**The evidence-based approach** is to arrest sex buyers, educate them, and use the revenue they can provide for survivor support. **H8057 would take Rhode Island in precisely the opposite direction.**

**“Sex work” advocates are industry representatives who asking you to take the most dangerous form of commerce that exists, and to abolish laws against it.** Decriminalize Sex Work, the ACLU, and their allies are insisting that this already dangerous commerce should operate with NO regulations, oversight, or taxation. **Supporting decriminalization would in fact set a precedent for just one type of business to be free of any**

**obligation to adhere to health and safety standards, provide employee records, to be properly licensed, adhere to zoning laws, pay unemployment insurance or income taxes, or contribute to social security.** Pimps could set up brothels or street operations literally anywhere, and nobody could do anything about it if it becomes fully decriminalized. Sex work advocates are arguing that this would somehow be fair and just, while ALL other businesses – ALL of which are less problematic - must follow laws, regulations, and pay taxes.

Sex trafficking cannot exist without prostitution, so ending prostitution ends trafficking. Full decriminalization supported by those arguing that “*sex work is work*” are in fact asking to be treated as if it were anything but. ***ALL other forms of work are subject to regulation and taxation.*** Any and all other types of business require adherence to workplace safety regulations, zoning restrictions, business licensing, and require systems of record keeping for payroll, social security, income, and other taxes.

Passing this bill would be certifying a massive tax evasion scheme. ***By passing H8057, the Rhode Island state legislature would be taking the world’s most dangerous form of commerce and selecting it to be the only one that deserves to be completely free of all laws, regulation, and taxation.*** If the argument is that “sex work is work,” then why are they asking for it to be treated as the one and only exception to how all other work is treated? If they really wanted “sex work” to be treated like all other work, then what should be proposed is a bill for *legalization*, such as the regulated and taxed brothel system in Nevada. But the groups supporting H8057 oppose legalization. We actually agree is a bad idea, given that legalization in Nevada, Germany, and elsewhere has been disastrous. But full decriminalization is far worse.

***Proponents of eliminating laws against prostitution*** argue that doing so promotes the health and safety of all involved, reduces abuses against those in the trade by destigmatizing it and removing barriers to reporting assaults to police, and frees up scarce police resources to focus on the more serious problem of sex trafficking. It all sounds sensible, when well presented. ***But those promised benefits have never occurred.***

How do we know? Because ***removing or ignoring laws against prostitution has been tried many times, in many places, in many forms, over many decades, and failed every time.*** One need not accept promises and assertions about what *might* or *should* happen. One need only look at what *does* happen. ***Full decriminalization, de facto decriminalization via "tolerance zones" or non-prosecution policies, and legalization have all failed to deliver on any of the promised benefits.*** Further below, we present a brief review based on more than 90 published studies and real-world examples demonstrating that ***when prostitution is decriminalized:***

- sex trafficking **increases.**
- arrests and convictions for sex trafficking **decrease.**
- abuses against those being sold and trafficked **increase.**
- community-level complaints about the escalating harms of the sex trade in their neighborhoods **increase.**
- the stigma against persons in the sex trade **is not reduced.**
- Public health is **not improved.**

H8057 begins with a recitation of findings of the Final Report of the Special Legislative Commission to Study Ensuring Racial Equity and Optimizing Health and Safety Laws Affecting Marginalized Individuals (hereafter, the ***Commission Report***) that recommended the full decriminalization of prostitution. Approaching the report as a criminal justice policy researcher, I carefully reviewed its contents, and ***found the 2023 Commission Report to contain very little research at all, and the sparse evidence that was presented directly contradicts its recommendation that prostitution decriminalization would improve public health.*** A more detailed discussion is provided below.

The 2023 Commission report also neglected to mention or refute *the massive body of research evidence and the historical record showing the decriminalization of prostitution to consistently and profoundly fail to reduce harm or to produce any of its promised benefits*. This also will be discussed in more detail below, but briefly, *the Commission Report presented findings from just two published studies* supporting decriminalization, one of which was thoroughly critiqued and convincingly discredited, and the other containing little more than qualitative accounts about how those sold in the sex trade would prefer not to get arrested (and we agree: they should not be arrested).

*A review of the 2023 Commission Report found that the Commission did not attempt to pursue, let alone achieve, its stated mission of completing a “comprehensive study” of the safety and health impacts of law, or the other topics mandated by its enabling legislation, 2021 H 5250 Sub A. The Commission’s stated purpose was:*

*“...to make a comprehensive study and provide recommendations on the health and safety impact of revising laws related to commercial sexual activity, identifying the methods of human trafficking and exploitation to develop strategies to reduce these activities, and ensuring accountability in the treatment of marginalized and targeted communities by police.” (2023 Commission Report, P. 4)*

*“There has been significant research on the safety and health impact of laws, specifically related to violence, exploitation, stigma, human trafficking, and sexual health, but more needs to be done analyzing the data.” (page 1, lines 1-3, [H5250](#))*

There are many substantial weaknesses in the Commission’s study. For example:

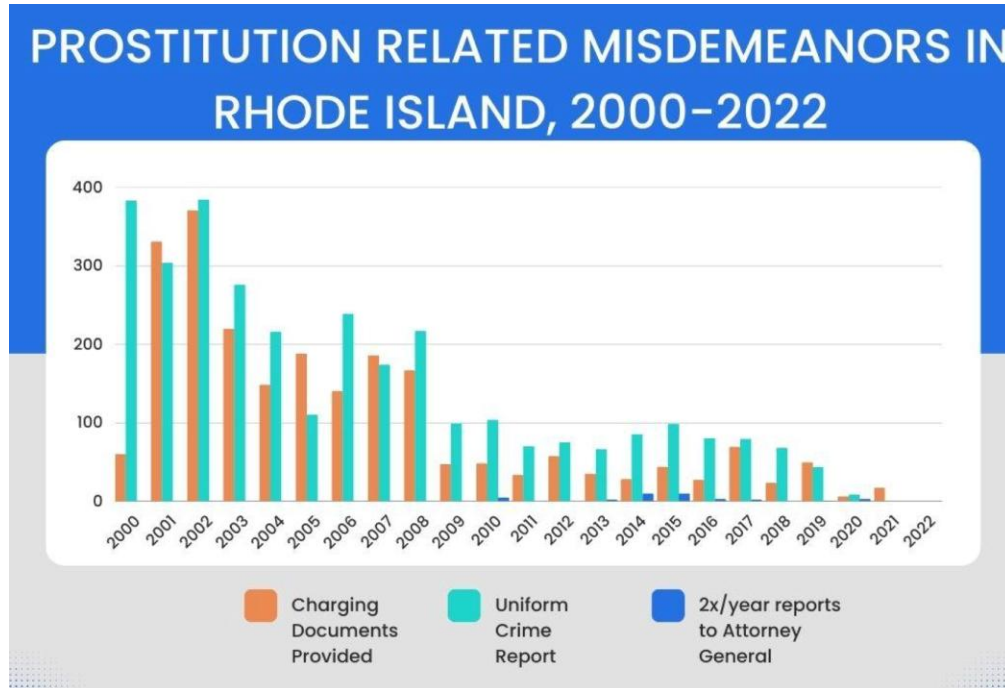
- **Very little actual research was conducted.**
  - o There are **tens of thousands of published studies** on prostitution, sex trafficking, and decriminalization. The **Commission used just two published studies**, and both of those were acquired before the Commission even existed (they were cited in the 2021 bill authorizing the study). **During more than two years, the commission acquired, reviewed, and cited no new published studies.**
  - o **Just one public hearing was conducted, with just three speakers**, all affiliated with COYOTE.
  - o Most of the presentations occurring during Commission meetings were by other commission members. Much of the “research” of the commission was its members talking to one another.
- **The sparse research used is deeply flawed, and does not support the report’s conclusions.**
  - o One of the two published studies used has been thoroughly debunked as "junk science" (Cunningham's 2018 study of Rhode Island's rape and gonorrhea rates 2004-2009)<sup>1</sup>.
  - o The other (Platt et. al, 2018) was a large qualitative study which does not support causal inferences about the law and prostitution outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cunningham and Shah’s (2018) study of Rhode Island's rape and gonorrhea rates between 2004-2009 was thoroughly debunked by Lachapelle et al. (2019). **The main problem was that decriminalization occurred over a 29-year period, while the Cunningham study examined only the last 5 years.** Slicing out only a small fragment of the trend lines provided the appearance of a negative impact, while the full span does not. In addition, attributing massive trends in outcomes for all populations to the behavior of a small fragment of the population is nonsensical. Furthermore, arrest data presented by COYOTE shows fewer prostitution arrests AFTER decriminalization than before, and the RI Department of Health attributed the rise in gonorrhea to increases in condomless sex, substance use and addiction, less awareness about STIs, and underfunded health systems – NOT to criminalized prostitution.

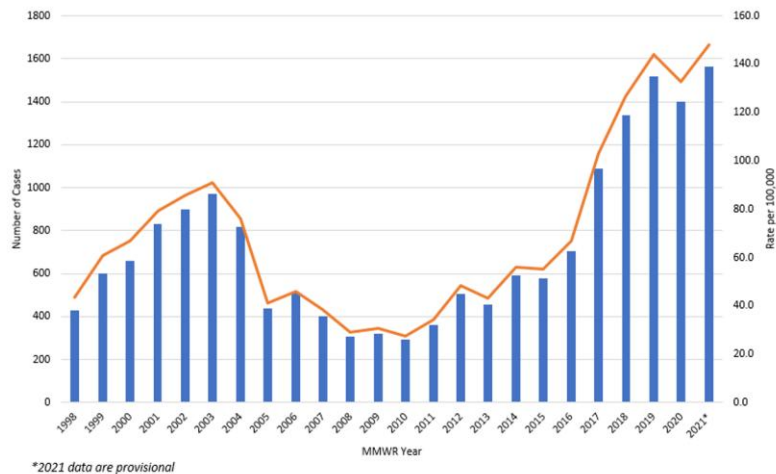
<sup>2</sup> The Commission said Platt et al. (2018) was a meta-analysis across 134 jurisdictions examining health impacts of different legal frameworks, but isn't. That report examined 134 separate studies, only 40 of which contained quantitative data, and Platt et al. **concluded the quantitative data quality did not allow them to be used for making any causal inferences about the impact of law.** They were left with **94 qualitative studies, which also does not provide a foundation for making causal inferences.** The Platt study provided nothing substantial to empirically support the claim that full decriminalization is beneficial.

- ***The research presented by the Commission Report is contradictory.*** For example, it is a classic mistake to look at a correlation between two measures and assume that one is causing the other. But even if we assume that this is a legitimate approach, ***the data presented in the Commission Report on prostitution arrests and gonorrhea directly contradicts the claim that decriminalization promotes health.***
  - The RI arrest data cited in COYOTE’s analysis shows prostitution arrest rates during decriminalization (before 2009) were less than half of what they were after prostitution became criminalized.
  - Gonorrhea rates have increased over 400% since 2009, during a time when prostitution arrests have been at their lowest levels.
  - If one is going to draw causal inferences based on the correlation of police activity and gonorrhea, one would conclude that a decline in policing prostitution has led to an increase in gonorrhea, based on the evidence presented in the Commission Report.
  - Rather than assert without evidence that prostitution is driving statewide STI rates one way or another, it is more likely that the drivers are other factors, stated in a presentation to the Commission by the RI Department of Health, which attributed the rise in gonorrhea to increases in condomless sex, substance use and addiction, less awareness about STIs, and underfunded health systems.



Source: COYOTE Rhode Island. (2023). ***Prostitution and Prostitution-Related Charges in Rhode Island, 2000-Present***, page 10. Presentation to the Rhode Island Special Legislative Commission to Study Ensuring Racial Equity and Optimizing Health and Safety Laws Affecting Marginalized Individuals.

## Number of Gonorrhea Diagnoses, Rhode Island, 1998-2021



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health

Source: Rhode Island Department of Public Health (2022). *Update on Sexually Transmitted Infections*, page 8. Presentation to the Rhode Island Special Legislative Commission to Study Ensuring Racial Equity and Optimizing Health and Safety Laws Affecting Marginalized Individuals.

### Why are STIs increasing?

- Increased condomless sex (due to effective contraception and PrEP and HIV treatment);
- Riskier sex associated with substance use and addiction;
- Less awareness and concern about “other” STIs (compared to HIV);
- Limited investment in clinical and public health infrastructure to address STIs.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Public Health (2022). *Update on Sexually Transmitted Infections*, page 11. Presentation to the Rhode Island Special Legislative Commission to Study Ensuring Racial Equity and Optimizing Health and Safety Laws Affecting Marginalized Individuals.

- **Another substantial weakness of the Commission Report was that only one perspective was seriously considered.**
  - o *The study gathered testimony, documentation, and input almost exclusively from decriminalization proponents*, e.g., COYOTE, the Ishtar Collective, Decriminalize Sex Work, the ACLU, and a university professor with a track record of support of decriminalization.
  - o The Commission members were hand-picked to be pro-decriminalization, without ANY diversity of opinion. *NO non-governmental organizations or individuals opposing decriminalization or in a position of neutrality were invited.*

**A study that gathered testimony, documentation, and input almost exclusively from decriminalization proponents is not a true study at all, let alone a comprehensive one.** It is a political document, pursuing an ideological position and assembling a case for a foregone conclusion, rather than posing the question of what would happen under decriminalization and following the full range of evidence to whatever conclusions are supported by hard evidence.

*A real study that actually sought to answer the question of what would happen if prostitution were fully decriminalized would have encountered and considered the extensive evidence of the failures of decriminalization, such as the following.*

***Examples across the U.S. consistently show that decriminalization leads to more crime and worse health outcomes.*** For example, in 2022 California took a step toward decriminalization when Governor [Gavin Newsom](#) signed [Senate Bill 357](#) to repeal a prostitution loitering law. [Police](#) objected that the loitering law was one of the key weapons at their disposal for apprehending pimps and traffickers, and provided the foundation for probable cause to start investigations that lead to identifying and supporting victims. Although the bill just went into effect on January 1, the message that was sent to police throughout the state last year was to "stand down" on prostitution enforcement—a message not lost on those profiting from the sex trade. As prostitution and its inevitable collateral violence have rapidly increased, the [mayor](#) of National City, California, has directly linked the latest relaxation of prohibitions to the escalating problem.

***Prostitution "tolerance zones" have been tried and have failed every time.*** Boston sought to manage its rampant prostitution problems in the 1960s and 1970s by allowing it within a few square blocks. The area quickly became known as the "[combat zone](#)" and became one of the most dangerous areas in the state, while abuses against sex trade survivors flourished.

This same basic story is being repeated right now. Over the past five years, prosecutors in several U.S. cities declared policies of *de facto decriminalization* by refusing to prosecute prostitution, along with a number of other crimes. ***The results have been, predictably, disastrous, and the District Attorneys adopting such policies in [Baltimore](#), [Los Angeles](#) and [San Francisco](#), were voted out of office at the next opportunity.***<sup>i</sup>

Several suburbs of London are currently experimenting with tolerance zones, again to disastrous effect. The voices of [residents](#) in these areas echo the "war zone" language used to describe Boston 50 years earlier, but are ignored or silenced.

***The results from other countries are just as dismal.*** New Zealand decriminalized prostitution two decades ago, and found that doing so almost completely [undermined](#) its ability to investigate sex trafficking cases, let alone convict or punish anyone for it, and has made it nearly impossible to identify sex trafficking victims. This profound failure led the U.S. State Department in [2021](#) to downgrade New Zealand [from](#) a Tier I to a Tier II nation in its annual global [Trafficking in Persons Report](#) rankings.

***Legalization has also failed to advance public health and human rights or to reduce harm.*** The Netherlands tried to solve its prostitution and sex trafficking problems by instituting legal brothels in Amsterdam's famous

red-light district. It has never worked as [intended](#), and has encouraged smuggling of foreign victims and increased illegal prostitution outside of the legal brothels. After decades of trying to make it work, the [city](#) gave up and has been trying to dismantle its legal brothel system and move it elsewhere—only to find that [other cities](#) don't want the disastrous mess either. In the U.S., Nevada's legal brothels "employ" less than 500 of the state's 30,000-plus women in prostitution, the remainder exploited and trafficked in the illegal market that has been vastly expanded and encouraged by the state's [tacit acceptance](#) of the sex trade.

***Decriminalization and legalization also fail to destigmatize the sex trade, contrary to proponents' claims.*** Australia's system of state laws contain a mix of both legal frameworks, and after many years in place, "sex work" advocates report that they face traumatizing and pervasive [stigma](#) in all aspects of their lives. While we agree that those exploited in the sex trade should certainly not be stigmatized or abused, it is also undeniably true that legalization is an abject failure, by their accounts.

***One need not speculate about what may happen if prostitution laws are repealed or go unenforced.*** We've seen this movie many times before, and know it turns out badly every time, for everyone. ***Allowing an inherently dangerous, illegal trade to expand unabated and without recourse does not reduce harm, particularly to those who are prostituted.***

In addition to such real-world examples of relaxing or eliminating prohibitions, published peer-reviewed studies of various aspects of the sex trade again point to harmful outcomes. ***Below, I present a sample of such evidence, supported by more than 90 published studies.***

- ***Commercial sex is exceptionally dangerous<sup>ii</sup>, and evidence disputes the contention that full decriminalization would alleviate the problem.***
  - Asserting that full decriminalization improves conditions for those in prostitution and sex trafficking defies the evidence, and there is a substantial empirical record refuting each of the assertions about how full decriminalization reduces harm. ***The weight of the evidence shows the net effect of full decriminalization to expand commercial sex markets, and increase the prevalence and incidence of harm to prostituted and trafficked persons.*** Cross national studies have found higher levels of human trafficking in countries with legalized or decriminalized prostitution,<sup>iii</sup> and commercial sex activity levels are much higher per capita in Nevada than in other states.<sup>iv</sup>
  - Reviews of numerous epidemiological studies have found that ***the majority of adult prostituted women were sex trafficked as youth and/or were forced or deceived into commercial sexual exploitation as adults.***<sup>v</sup>
- ***Most of the abuse of prostituted persons is committed by sex buyers and traffickers, and there is no evidence that buyers and traffickers predisposed to abuse when police are watching would suddenly change their behavior for the better when police are pulled away.*** It is possible that prostituted and sex trafficked persons might be more likely to report abuses to police under full decriminalization, but those gains can also be accomplished by Abolition/Nordic model partial decriminalization (removing penalties for prostituted persons).
- Rather than advancing safety and human rights of prostituted persons, research has found removing legal prohibitions of prostitution to produce the opposite: among other detrimental effects, ***removing prohibitions normalizes violence against prostituted persons.*** For example, in an analysis of thousands of online reviews of legal prostitution "services" in Australia, researchers found that sex buyer's admissions of inflicting harm to prostituted women were common, and it was evident that they actively constructed and normalized narratives of sexual violation and violence against women in licensed brothels.<sup>vi</sup> These findings are similar to those

found in research on sex buyers in Chicago (where prostitution remains criminalized): the two main themes in communications among committed sex buyers were (a) toxic masculinity and (b) violence against women, and that their self-described identity is closely associated with maintaining, perpetrating, and minimizing violence against women.<sup>vii</sup>

- Research has found ***100% of convicted sex traffickers to support full decriminalization***,<sup>viii</sup> and it is safe to assume the vast majority of sex buyers would also prefer full decriminalization. Giving sex traffickers, pimps, and abusive sex buyers exactly the policy they prefer should cause proponents of full decriminalization to consider whether they are on the right side of the debate.
- ***There is no basis in research or in the law enforcement practice literature to suggest that fully decriminalizing prostitution would be either necessary or sufficient to reduce police maltreatment of prostituted persons***, and a robust literature showing a range of ***programs can improve police conduct without full decriminalization*** or other changed to criminal codes. For example, training and education programs were found to significantly reduce punitive actions and abuses by police against women in prostitution in the United Kingdom<sup>ix</sup> and India<sup>x</sup> without any change in the legal status of commercial sex.
- There is no credible evidence to support the claim that partial decriminalization or legalization increase stigmatization and violence, and substantial evidence that ***full decriminalization contributes to more violence and sex trafficking***, and does nothing to reduce stigma. For example:
- ***Full decriminalization of prostitution undermines law enforcement’s ability to detect and investigate human trafficking***—and thereby removes a powerful deterrent to sex trafficking.
  - Police operations focused on enforcing prostitution laws are an important source of leads for sex trafficking cases; ***full decriminalization blocks sex trafficking investigation leads***.<sup>xi</sup>
  - During routine investigations and stings targeting misdemeanor prostitution, police often learn that “providers” are not consenting adults, but are either minors or are compelled by force, fraud, or coercion – and hence victims of felony sex trafficking. ***Probable cause for simple prostitution allows police to confirm identities and ages of prostituted persons and in doing so learn whether the person is a minor***,<sup>xii</sup> and if so, a sex trafficking victim by legal definition.
  - By severely impairing the ability to detect and investigate sex trafficking, and absent even the pretext of oversight and regulation ostensibly provided by legalization, ***the full decriminalization of prostitution makes it far easier for those sexually exploiting and illegally trafficking people to operate freely***, without fear of repercussions.
  - ***More than fifteen years after prostitution was fully decriminalized in New Zealand in 2003, there was a nearly complete absence of sex trafficking investigations, arrests, or prosecutions*** despite intelligence from law enforcement and social service agencies indicating prevalent sex trafficking of children and adults. In the U.S. State department’s *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report*, it was reported that the New Zealand Government did not identify any victims of sex trafficking during the reporting period and had no sex trafficking prosecutions.<sup>xiii</sup> New Zealand law enforcement agencies identified full decriminalization as an impediment to identifying victims and pursuing sex trafficking cases:

*“Law enforcement reportedly had legal limitations on their ability to proactively screen for trafficking victims... within the legal commercial sex industry. For example, due to regulations prohibiting police from inspecting legal brothels without a complaint, police relied on an organization that works closely with persons in commercial sex to report potential violations. Nonetheless, the government did not report providing training to the organization’s staff on definitions or indicators of sex trafficking, or procedures for referring trafficking victims to services.”<sup>xiv</sup>*

- ***In the years following full decriminalization in New Zealand, prostituted persons continued to be frequently exploited*** through debt bondage, drug addiction, and the use of fines to coerce service in commercial sex, and crime against survivors continued to be under-reported<sup>xv</sup> A New Zealand Parliamentary report estimated that, ***after full decriminalization, 200 children were being sold for sex at any given time***, but government agencies remained profoundly uncertain about the scope and traits of the decriminalized commercial sex industry, unable to calculate or reliably estimate the number of people involved in the sex industry, and possessing little information about clients.<sup>xvi</sup>
- ***Research on indoor prostitution in Rhode Island provides similar evidence of decriminalization interfering with the pursuit of sex trafficking cases.***<sup>xvii</sup> Since sex trafficking investigations were often initiated by prostitution stings or investigations where they posed as sex buyers to contact prostituted and trafficked persons, police were often unable to investigate suspected sex trafficking because indoor prostitution was decriminalized and they could not meet the necessary legal requirements of probable cause to investigate further regarding sex trafficking. Its decriminalization of prostitution also excluded Rhode Island from participating in a national partnership with the FBI, the Department of Justice, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to investigate the domestic sex trafficking of children, because local and state police had no authority to investigate prostitution.
- Given the evidence that full decriminalization hinders law enforcement and thus reduces disincentives for sex traffickers, it is reasonable to conclude that ***full decriminalization increases sex trafficking and expands the numbers of individuals exposed to unsafe conditions and violence.***
- ***Full decriminalization (as well as legalization) of prostitution has been found to increase the scope of commercial sex markets and increase the prevalence of sex trafficking.***
  - A study comparing ***39 nations*** and another study comparing ***150 nations*** examined the relationship between prostitution laws and measures of human trafficking, and found that ***sex trafficking is most prevalent in countries where prostitution is legal or decriminalized.***<sup>xviii</sup>
  - Full decriminalization of indoor prostitution in the U.S. state of ***Rhode Island*** was found to increase the size of the prostitution market.<sup>xix</sup>
  - Legalization of prostitution in ***Nevada*** has resulted in an immense illegal prostitution and sex trafficking market, and far less than 10% of the women in prostitution operate in the legal, regulated brothel system.<sup>xx</sup>
- ***Research has found abolitionist models to be far more effective than those that decriminalize or legalize prostitution in reducing harm.*** E.g., an analysis comparing the legal frameworks of Sweden and two other countries that permit legal prostitution (Australia and The Netherlands) and concluded that legalization was the least effective in reducing illegal street prostitution and human trafficking.<sup>xxi</sup> Research has found that the rate of prostitution in Sweden is between 30 and 40 times lower than that of the Netherlands,<sup>xxii</sup> where prostitution is legal, and is the lowest of all European nations.<sup>xxiii</sup>
- ***There is no evidence that full decriminalization of prostitution would significantly reduce stigmatization of those involved.***
  - ***There is a vast body of research finding stigmatization to remain where prostitution has been legalized or fully decriminalized, and in forms of sexualized business that have long been fully legal:*** Research finds that stigma is prevalent in legal sectors of the commercial sex economy, including

legalized prostitution;<sup>xxiv</sup> “exotic dancing” or stripping;<sup>xxv</sup> phone sex;<sup>xxvi</sup> sex shops;<sup>xxvii</sup> and the pornography industry.<sup>xxviii</sup>

- ***It is also demonstrably false that removing legal prohibitions would produce better mental health outcomes for those involved in commercial sex.***
  - For example, a study comparing 134 women “adult film performers” to 1,773 other young women of similar age in the same region of California found that ***those in the legal pornography industry had significantly worse mental health indicators and higher rates of depression.***<sup>xxix</sup>
  - ***Most prostituted people dislike it, experience physical and sexual violence while doing it, and would not do it if they had access to feasible options.*** Dozens of studies in health and social work environments find the vast majority of surveyed people to wish they could exit prostitution, and would if they had viable options.<sup>xxx</sup>
  - ***Most prostituted people try to leave the illicit industry,*** but find doing so to be very difficult,<sup>xxxi</sup> with many unable to leave, and most who are successful cycle in and out of prostitution five to six times before successfully exiting.<sup>xxxii</sup> Among the barriers to exiting prostitution are a lack of employment and job training opportunities; lack of affordable housing; poor access to health care; substance abuse and addictions; being controlled by others blocking their exit; and psychological addictions.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Such factors often prevent prostituted people from moving away from high-risk environments and make it easier to reenter commercial sex markets.<sup>xxxiv</sup>
- Few things have a more profound negative impact on physical and mental health than having people purchase sexual access to one’s body. ***Hundreds of peer reviewed studies conducted throughout the world consistently find extreme levels of harm to prostituted persons,***<sup>xxxv</sup> ***regardless of the legal status of prostitution where it occurs,*** whether in indoor or outdoor venues, or any other categorizations of commercial sex markets and populations. Numerous studies find that prostituted women who engage in sex work are at increased risk for depression, suicide, homicide, sexual assault, battery, substance abuse and other harms.<sup>xxxvi</sup> For example,
  - A U.S. study found that ***prostituted persons have mortality rates almost 200 times greater than those found among other women with similar demographic profiles.*** The three most common causes of death were, in order: ***homicide, suicide,*** and health consequences ***drug and alcohol abuse.***<sup>xxxvii</sup>
  - A review of the literature and analysis of nine different data sets concluded that ***prostituted women “...have the highest homicide victimization rate of any set of women ever studied.”***<sup>xxxviii</sup>
  - A survey conducted in London found that ***57% of escorts and prostituted women had been assaulted in indoor venues.***<sup>xxxix</sup>
  - Interviews with sexually exploited women in New York city found that ***48% said they had been sexually assaulted in indoor prostitution*** or while working as “escorts.”<sup>xl</sup>
  - Another set of interviews in New York City found that ***“escorts” who work indoors “...are beaten twice a year, on average.”***<sup>xli</sup>
  - A study of nearly 700 prostituted persons in Canada found ***49% had been diagnosed with a mental health issue, with the most common diagnoses being depression (35%).***<sup>xlii</sup>

Instead of taking the world's most dangerous enterprise and choosing it to be the only form of commerce completely free of all laws and regulation, we support the evidence-based Equality Model, which ends the punishment of sexually exploited persons while continuing to work toward reducing the sex trade by arresting and sanctioning traffickers, pimps, and sex buyers.

The path to safety and protection of human rights is prevention, achieved by keeping and enforcing laws against pimping, trafficking, and purchasing sex, while providing support and pathways out for those who are exploited.

## **Rhode Island Commercial Sex Venues, Websites**

April, 2026

### **Physical Locations used for In-Person Solicitation of Prostitution**

- Strip Clubs, e.g.
  - Foxy Lady – Providence
  - Cadillac Lounge - Providence
  - Wonderland – Providence
  - Desire Gentlemen's Club – Providence
  - Club Fantasies – Providence
  - The Mega-Plex - Providence
  - Rhode Island Dolls – Woonsocket
  - Mickey's Gentlemen's Club - Cumberland
- Massage businesses
- Nail salons
- Spas / Massage business
  - More than 50 with [documented prostitution](#) & [arrests](#)
- Gyms
- Bars, Taverns

### **Generic Online Apps, Platforms Used for Soliciting Prostitution**

- Gaming systems (e.g., Xbox)
- Social media (e.g., Discord, Instagram, Onlyfans, Reddit, Snapchat, TikTok)
- Messaging apps (e.g., Session, Signal, Sniffles, Telegram, WhatsApp, Wire)
- Advertising websites, community forums (e.g., Craigslist)

### **Commercial Sex/Escort Websites with Rhode Island Listings**

1. Ads Encounters  
<https://adsencounters.com/rhode-island-r782081>
2. Adult Search  
<https://adultsearch.com/us/rhode-island/female-escorts>
3. Atlas Escorts  
<https://us.atlasescorts.com/escorts-in-rhode-island>
4. 2Backpage  
<https://providence.2backpage.com>
5. Backlist24  
<https://providence.backlist24.com/post/female-escorts>
6. Backpagegals.com  
[https://backpagegals.com/escorts\\_providence-c50337](https://backpagegals.com/escorts_providence-c50337)
7. Bedpage

8. <https://us-providence.bedpage.com>  
Bonepage  
<https://providence.bonepage.com>
9. Bunnyagent  
<https://bunnyagent.com/us/rhode-island/female-escorts>
10. CallEscort  
[https://callesort.org/index.php?state=Rhode-Island&city=Providence&p=1&order=age\\_reverse](https://callesort.org/index.php?state=Rhode-Island&city=Providence&p=1&order=age_reverse)
11. City Hotties  
<https://www.cityhotties.com/listing-location/rhode-island/>
12. Colton SD  
<https://www.coltonsd.com/us/independent-escorts/rhode-island>
13. Emerans  
<https://emerans.com/escorts/usa/rhode-island>
14. Eros.com  
[https://www.eros.com/rhode\\_island/providence/eros.htm](https://www.eros.com/rhode_island/providence/eros.htm)
15. Erotic Monkey  
<https://www.eroticmonkey.ch/escorts-warwick-564>
16. Erotic Review  
<https://www.theeroticreview.com/reviews/city-providence-ri-us/escorts>
17. Escort Access  
<https://escortaccess.net>
18. Escort Ads  
<https://www.escort-ads.com/escorts/united-states/providence>
19. Escort Babylon  
[https://escortbabylon.net/provider\\_list/last\\_review/providence/1](https://escortbabylon.net/provider_list/last_review/providence/1)
20. Escort IZ  
<https://www.escortiz.com/escorts/providence-ri>
21. Escorts Affair  
<https://us.escortsaffair.com/providence>
22. Gemidos.tv  
<https://gemidos.tv/usa-rhode-island?hl=en>
23. Harlot Hub  
<https://harlothub.com/search/female-escorts/providence/ri-escort-services/index3.html>
24. Hookers Near Me  
<https://hookers-near-me.com/hookers-in-providence/>
25. Hot.com  
<https://hot.com/us/ri/providence/escorts/gallery>
26. Hot VIP Escort  
<https://www.hotvipescort.com/en/united-states/rhode-island/>
27. Kitty Ads  
<https://www.kittyads.com/ads3-321-US-Rhode-Island-Rhode-Island-Escorts>
28. Ladys.one  
<https://ladys.one/providence-escorts>
29. ListCrawler  
<https://escortalligator.com.listcrawler.eu/brief/escorts/usa/rhodeisland/providence/3>
30. LocalXList  
<https://localxlist.org/p/united-states/rhode-island/rhode-island/categories/casual-dating/female-escorts/post-list>
31. McCoy's Guide  
<https://www.mccoysguide.com/services/all/rhode-island>
32. My Escort Network  
<https://providence.myescort.network/female-escorts/45>
33. OneBackPage  
[https://onebackpage.com/female-escorts\\_rhode-island-r782081/5](https://onebackpage.com/female-escorts_rhode-island-r782081/5)
34. Private Tryst

- 35. <https://www.privatetryst.com/city/225>  
Rubmaps  
<https://rubmaps.city/rhode-island/>
- 36. Rubrankins  
<https://rubrankings.com/united-states/rhode-island/providence/>
- 37. Secret Hostess  
<https://secrethostess.com/category/escorts/country/usa/city/providence-ri/>
- 38. Sipsap  
<https://sipsap.com/xadd/html2/rhode-island-escorts-1.html>
- 39. Skipthegames  
[https://skipthegames.com/posts/rhode-island\\_st/escorts](https://skipthegames.com/posts/rhode-island_st/escorts)
- 40. Slixia  
<https://www.slixia.com/rhode-island/providence/>
- 41. Southern GFE  
<https://www.southerngfe.com/escorts/rhode-island/providence>
- 42. Star Backpage  
<https://providence.starbackpage.com>
- 43. Sweet Daddies  
<https://sweetdaddies.com/locations/ri>
- 44. Sugar Babies  
<https://sugarbabies.co/babies/rhode-island/>
- 45. Sugar Daddy  
<https://www.sugardaddy.com/sugar-daddies/rhode-island>
- 46. SugarDaddyMeet  
<https://www.sugardaddymeet.com/us/rhode-island>
- 47. Tryst  
<https://tryst.link/us/escorts/rhode-island>
- 48. TS Escorts  
<https://www.tsescorts.com/rhode-island/providence/shemale-escorts>
- 49. Woobs Escorts  
<https://www.woobs.com/female-escorts/united-states/rhode-island>
- 50. XHamster  
<https://xhamster.com/dating/us/ri?sort=activity>
- 51. XLamma  
<https://xlamma.com/us/providence-ri-escorts#>
- 52. XNXX  
<https://www.xnxx.com/search/real+whores+Providence+Rhode+Island+whore+prostitute>
- 53. YesBackpage  
<https://www.yesbackpage.com/677/posts/8-Adult/122-Female-Escorts/>

**Rhode Island Casual Sex, “Hookup” Websites**

- 54. Age Match  
<https://www.agematch.com/us>
- 55. American Sex Contacts  
<https://www.americansexcontacts.com/Sex-Contacts-Rhode-Island.php>
- 56. Anonymous Encounters  
<https://www.anonymous-encounters.com/us/discreet-sex-rhode-island/>
- 57. Ashley Madison  
[https://www.ashleymadison.com/alt-esc-lp2/?offer\\_id=7&affiliate\\_id=89&affiliate\\_sub=calle&affiliate\\_click\\_id=w51vn48fsdq3pc6hjtcfjbcg&transaction\\_id=102a79548c18f4d67028be0d082776](https://www.ashleymadison.com/alt-esc-lp2/?offer_id=7&affiliate_id=89&affiliate_sub=calle&affiliate_click_id=w51vn48fsdq3pc6hjtcfjbcg&transaction_id=102a79548c18f4d67028be0d082776)
- 58. BDSM Connex  
<https://www.bdsmconnex.com/usa/providence-rhode-island/>
- 59. Best F\*\*\* Buddy

60. <https://www.static.bestfuckbuddy.com/RI>  
Bindr
61. <https://www.bindr.dating/us-dating/rhode-island/fluid-dating>  
Bisexual Playground
62. [https://www.bisexualplayground.com/browse/6884/Providence\\_Rhode\\_Island\\_United\\_States](https://www.bisexualplayground.com/browse/6884/Providence_Rhode_Island_United_States)  
Book of Matches
63. [https://www.bookofmatches.com/freedating/area/rhode\\_island-rhode\\_island-4.htm](https://www.bookofmatches.com/freedating/area/rhode_island-rhode_island-4.htm)  
Buddy Bate
64. <https://buddybate.com/category/location/providence-ri>  
Busy Match
65. <https://www.busymatch.com/personals-US-RI>  
Call Your Date
66. <https://callyourdate.com/land/sp/>  
Casual Fling
67. <https://www.casual-fling.com/us/rhode-island>  
Casual Hookup
68. <https://www.casualhookup.net/region/rhode-island/>  
Cute Local Girls
69. <https://www.cutelocalgirls.com/RI/providence/1>  
DateHookup
70. <https://datehookup.dating/single-women-ri-johnston.htm>  
Do U Like
71. <https://www.doulike.com/usa/rhode-island/hookup.html>  
DoubleList
72. <https://doublelist.com/city/providence/>  
DoULike
73. <https://www.doulike.com/usa/rhode-island/personals.html>  
Doublelist
74. <https://doublelist.com/city/providence/>  
Easy Sex
75. <http://www.easysex.com/local-sex/united-states/rhode-island/providence/>  
Ella Paradis
76. <https://ellaparadis.com/blogs/adult-sites/find-sex-in-rhode-island-women-looking-to-fuck?srsIid=AfmBOocNohQmNvHIGYbklhA3hxAyPTzqriTHBnGhfYwMZG9hIPf9RvE>  
FindAF\*\*\*Tonight
77. <https://us.findafucktonight.com/get-fucked-in-rhode-island.html>  
Fling
78. <https://www.fling.com/local/rhode-island/>  
Flirt Tendre
79. <https://flirtendre.com>  
Get X Personal
80. <https://www.getxpersonal.com/ads/cranston-rhode-island>  
Great Local Girls
81. <https://www.greatlocalgirls.com/RI>  
Hookup Cloud
82. <http://www.hookupcloud.com/meet-singles/united-states/rhode-island/warwick/>  
Hookups Society
83. <https://www.hookup-society.com/us/rhode-island-hookups/>  
Hotel Introductions
84. <https://www.hotelintroductions.com/us/rhode-island/>  
Lets Hang Out
85. <https://www.letshangout.com/dating/5224151/rhode-island/providence/single-women/>  
Lets Meet Up
86. [https://casual.letsmeetup.com/map/usa/rhode\\_island.html](https://casual.letsmeetup.com/map/usa/rhode_island.html)

86. Local Bang Club  
<https://local-bangs.com/rhode-island/pawtucket.html>
87. Local BDSM Ads  
[https://playroom.sub-or-dom.com/map/usa/rhode\\_island.html](https://playroom.sub-or-dom.com/map/usa/rhode_island.html)
88. Locanto  
<https://www.locanto.com/providence/Casual-Encounters/207/>
89. Love Awake  
[https://www.loveawake.com/free-online-dating/United-States/state-of-Rhode-Island.html?page=77#google\\_vignette](https://www.loveawake.com/free-online-dating/United-States/state-of-Rhode-Island.html?page=77#google_vignette)
90. Mega Friends  
<http://www.megafriends.com/secountry.php?location=48&sex=2>
91. Mega Personals  
<https://themegapersonals.com>
92. My Bed or Yours  
<https://mybedoryours.com/united-states/looking-for-sex-westerly--rhode-island/>
93. Online Booty Call  
<https://www.onlinebootycall.com/local-dating/rhode-island/meet-singles-in-providence>
94. Online Local Girls  
<https://www.onlinelocalgirls.com/RI/2>
95. My Bed of Yours  
<https://mybedoryours.com/united-states/looking-for-sex-rhode-island/>
96. Nasty Hookups  
<https://www.nastyhookups.com/rhode-island/hookup.html>
97. NSFWDog  
<https://nswfdog.com/kink/gloryhole/gloryhole-ri?dir=desc>
98. Plenty of Fish  
<https://www.pof.com/dating/city/22373/rhodeisland/>
99. Real Casual Sex  
<https://realcasualex.com/Rhode-Island.php>
100. Rocktie  
<https://www.rocktie.com/us/ri>
101. Seeking Arrangements  
<https://www.seeking.com>
102. Sex Log  
<https://en-us.sexlog.com/swingers/rhode-island-block-island>
103. Sex on the Side  
<https://www.sexontheside.com/browse/state,2,1,,RI,US,rhode-island-cheater-dating.html>
104. SDC  
<https://www.sdc.com/rhode-island-swingers/providence-swingers-rhode-island.html>
105. Swing Towns  
<https://www.swingtowns.com/st/casual-sex-dating/rhodeisland-eastprovidence.htm>
106. The Adult Hub  
[https://swingers.theadulthub.com/map/usa/rhode\\_island.html](https://swingers.theadulthub.com/map/usa/rhode_island.html)
107. Tinder  
<https://tinder.com>
108. Who Fish  
[https://www.whofish.org/news/providence/ri/rhode\\_island\\_w4m\\_local\\_personals/2779.aspx](https://www.whofish.org/news/providence/ri/rhode_island_w4m_local_personals/2779.aspx)
109. X Home Alone  
<https://xhomealone.com/search/Tanya-MILF-Warwick-Rhode-Island/>

### **Rhode Island Webcams**

110. Camwhore Next Door  
<https://camwhorenexdoor.com/cam-whores/in/usa>  
Camwhoresbay

- <https://www.camwhoresbay.com/search/Rhode%20Island/>
111. Chaturbate  
<https://totallyfreecam.com/chaturbate/?location=RHODE-ISLAND>
112. Cross Creek Ministries  
<https://crosscreekministries.org/cranston-rhode-island-cam-girls/>
113. Erome  
<https://www.erome.com/search?q=rhode+island+slut&o=new>
114. Find Cam Girls  
<https://www.find-cam-girls.com/us/rhode-island-webcam-girls/>
115. Find Live Sex Rhode Island  
<https://www.find-live-sex.com/us/rhode-island-sex-cams/>
116. My Teen Webcam  
<https://myteenwebcam.com/cams/rhode-island/?location>
117. Omegle Chat  
<https://omegle-chat.com/united-states/rhode-island/east-providence-chat-room>
118. Talk 2 Stranger  
<https://talk2stranger.com/meetup/united-states/rhode-island>

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