

April 9, 2026

Dear Honorable Members of the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of TJP Advocacy, I write today to request your opposition to HB 8057 AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- COMMERCIAL SEXUAL ACTIVITY.

TJP Advocacy is a 501c (4) organization and is the action arm of The Jensen Project, a private operating foundation, supporting non-profits and individuals through strategic grants, resources, and holistic help. The Jensen Project was founded by Janet Jensen. Janet is a rape survivor and advocates committed to being a strategic partner in filling the needs of organizations in the fight against sexual violence by providing opportunities to expand their leadership skills and find a network of like-minded professionals to get support with staffing, cash flow, fundraising, operations, day-to-day questions, and more.

TJP Advocacy strongly opposes HB 8057 and any effort to fully decriminalize prostitution. Evidence shows that full decriminalization removes critical legal and cultural barriers to purchasing sex, increasing demand and, in turn, expanding the commercial sex trade. This expansion disproportionately harms vulnerable populations, including homeless youth, immigrants, and those experiencing economic instability, who are more likely to be targeted for exploitation.

Rhode Island's own history underscores these risks. From 1980 to 2009, a legal loophole effectively permitted indoor prostitution. During that period, the state saw a significant increase in commercial sexual exploitation, including trafficking and the exploitation of minors. Advocates reported that Rhode Island became a known destination for exploitation, with individuals trafficked from neighboring states.

Recent voter data further reinforces that full decriminalization is misaligned with public priorities. In 2025 The Jensen Project surveyed 761 Rhode Island voters.

- 87-88% of voters view reducing sex trafficking and violent crime as a top priority.
- 40% believe the state does not do enough to support individuals in prostitution with health, safety, and exit resources.
- 74% support current laws that criminalize the buying and selling of sex.
- 84% support increasing penalties for sex buyers.

These results demonstrate clear support for policies that both protect those who are exploited and hold exploiters accountable. Full decriminalization would move Rhode Island in the opposite direction.

TJP
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TJP Advocacy is committed to advancing survivor-centered policies that prevent exploitation, support pathways out, and hold those who cause harm accountable. We respectfully urge the Committee to oppose HB 8057.

Thank you for your consideration, and please reach out if there are any questions.

Sincerely,



Sarah Johnston Ellis
TJP Advocacy