



To Rhode Island's House Judiciary Committee,

You are receiving this letter on behalf of The Ishtar Collective; a regional anti-trafficking and sex worker rights collective primarily based out of Vermont. We have been a part of state wide and regionally applicable policy initiatives through the past four years in hopes of advancing the rights and general well being of consensual adult sex workers and survivors alike since our founding in 2020.

Our organization would like to express our strong support of H7165, granting immunity from prosecution for prostitution to victims and witnesses of/or victims to crime who report that crime to law enforcement, aid in the investigation of that crime, and/or seek healthcare services in relation to the crime.

Immunity protections create an important tool for law enforcement in their efforts to identify and prosecute perpetrators of violence and trafficking. In measures like this, we know we create potential for development where barriers of criminality are diminishing relationships and communication. period.

Nationally, we saw, in retrospective real time, what the insight of sex-workers could have done to influence the longevity of the Gilgo Beach Killings investigations.

Moreover, in our small state of Vermont, we saw the consequences of immunity take hold. community members (who also exist in sex work) feel emboldened now, to advocate for more than just themselves; truly putting themselves in the line of fire (knowing we voted toward their humanity) to further articulate the delicate and nuanced basic human needs of our community, as sex workers AND survivors of trafficking.

Immunity is one of the first policies the Ishtar Collective pushed for. People involved in the sex trade (whether by choice, circumstance, or by force, fraud, or coercion) are especially vulnerable to violence and exploitation, but frequently don't report crimes perpetrated against them due to fear of arrest. This distrust must be amended if we hope to forge new pathways of identifying abusers and predators, because, when those abusers aren't discovered by law enforcement, they are able to continue violence and exploitation with impunity. Thus, immunity policies serve a dual purpose: they allow victims and witnesses of crime to safely seek the services they need without fear of arrest, and they also provide invaluable tools for law enforcement investigating crimes including human trafficking, assault, and even murder.

What is important to our organization, as a regional presence aimed at supporting and humanizing adult consensual sex workers, is furthering the rights of sex worker rights. This extends to our relations with law enforcement and health care. We can all observe what happens when sexworkers are not allocated even vaguely phrased basic rights. The difference has deeply concerning implications. Pass H7165. Thank you for your consideration.

