

The logo features the text "Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics" in a stylized, slightly distressed font. The words "Call Off Your Old" are on the top line, and "Tired Ethics" is on the bottom line. The text is set against a background that includes a silhouette of the state of Rhode Island.

February 12, 2024

Dear House Judiciary Members,

We are writing to urge you to support H7307 and oppose H7165.

Any serious attempt to promote public safety or end sex trafficking must include allowing ALL sex workers, sex trafficking survivors, and our clients (who are first responders in most cases of sex trafficking) to report violence without being charged with prostitution or massaging without a license. H7307 accomplishes this.

By offering immunity from prostitution charges to those reporting sex workers for prostitution, H7165 would be another tool for bad actors who already pose as clients to try to coerce sex workers and sex trafficking survivors into performing unsafe, unwanted, or free services. This bill would increase violence against sex workers and sex trafficking survivors.

H7165 does not offer immunity from the most commonly charged prostitution-related misdemeanor, Massage Without a License, for those reporting violent crimes. In recent years, Massage Without License charges have made up as much as 81% of prostitution-related misdemeanors. Asian spa workers are increasingly targeted by [local police](#), [homeland security](#), and [mass shooters](#).

There has been some resistance to allowing Asian spa workers to report crimes like murder and sex trafficking without being charged with Massage Without a License. Rhode Island's most vulnerable citizens are relying on you to take a strong leadership role in prioritizing public safety over some people's moral discomfort with sex workers or sex trafficking survivors who have been victims or witnesses of heinous crimes and reported them to the police not being charged with this misdemeanor.

In 2009 during the [re-criminalization of prostitution in Rhode Island](#) under H5044 legislators [met with 30 Asian spa workers](#) who pled for their jobs and their basic human rights - to be able to call police for help, rather than be hunted by police. Legislators ignored their concerns and made them criminals that year. As a small update on the "unintended consequences" of criminalizing Asian spa workers, we would like to share with you this anonymous testimony from one Rhode Island Asian spa worker:

I worked at 2 Pawtucket spas that were raided. I was out of work during the raids, recovering from a medical procedure. The other workers told me how the police talked

down to them like they were trash. Prior to these raids 2 of the officers came into the spa several times and purchased our services. One who called himself Joe and he was pushy. He tried to get the workers to engage in intercourse without a condom. The other man tried to get the workers to date him. He promised them big tips and the last time he left without paying the woman. There were rumors that management got tired of paying off these 2 officers and we think that is why they were raided. Since then I work alone so I won't be charged with the bigger crimes for working with other spa workers. Since then I have been assaulted twice and robbed 3 times. I can't risk calling the police on bad men because if I got arrested I could lose my 2 grandchildren that I am raising since my daughter died of COVID. I just want to work and be safe.

Sex workers are once again before you telling you that H7165 would have serious unintended consequences and increase violence towards sex workers and sex trafficking survivors. Please listen to us this time and vote yes on H7307 and no on H7165.

Sincerely,

Tara Burns
Bella Robinson
Ramona Flour
Lindsey Jennings
Kayla Katt

Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, Rhode Island (COYOTE RI) is a group of current and former sex workers, sex trafficking survivors, and allies working towards safety and protection for everyone in Rhode Island's sex industries.