

Hi! I am KWD. I have a degree in sociology and a degree in WGSS from a State University of New York. I testified here in June with The Ishtar Collective, a non-profit organization I work alongside. I am a sex worker and have worked in adult entertainment venues for approximately 5 years, and have many friends in the consensual adult industry. Today I am here to express support for H7165 to grant immunity from prosecution for all forms of prostitution when reporting violence witnessed or experienced on the job.

For adult consensual service providers who now have a criminal record – what happens when these sex workers are ready to leave the industry and begin a more typical civilian career, but their background check scares future employers?

Those who seek out safe, emotional, and potentially sexual connections should not be criminalized. Folks who require a little more patience due to social anxiety or lack of sexual skill have the right to seek out help from consenting adults. Criminality has consequences beyond being arrested, being booked, and paying fines. Trauma for everyone involved in adult consensual sex work is 100% preventable with bills like this one.

During my studies at SUNY I wrote about the differences between Sex Work and Sex Trafficking, and today I would like to pull from a piece of media I studied specifically. PBS and Frontline released a documentary titled 'Sex Trafficking in America' in 2019. I acknowledge that this makes some of the information provided by this documentary to be a little dated, but the law enforcement statements ring true today– to quote one of the undercover officers: "When we arrest them, and their lives are completely shattered because they've now, you know, their pictures end up on websites, or they end up on the news, and their wives find out, because their cars have been towed. I have seen more grown men crying as a result of being arrested for this crime than any other crime." [end quote]

Law enforcement in this Frontline documentary also state that as of recent legislation, many officers do not know where to target their energy to finding and stopping traffickers, or people who are forcing or coercing anyone into labor.

House Bill number 7165 will take away some of those guessing games, saving law enforcement time and public resources.

When any member of a community can report violent people or dangerous activity, the whole community is safer. Sex workers interact with all sorts of people, from clubs to coco cabanas, and not all of them make us feel great.

Just like a waitress who doesn't enjoy someone sexualising their kindness, we do not appreciate when anyone takes advantage of the space we create together. When sex workers are safer, we are all safer.

Opposition to this immunity bill would be in direct support of predators and potentially violent members of our community. Thank you

Thank you for your patience. As you know I am KWD. I have a degree in sociology and a degree in WGSS from a State University of New York. I testified here in June with The Ishtar Collective, a non-profit organization I work alongside. I have worked in adult entertainment venues for approximately 5 years and have many friends in the consensual adult industry. Today I am here to express support for H7452, to repeal fines for those picked up under the presumption of prostitution.

I want to reiterate that it is impossible to keep oneself out of financial hardship when being charged exorbitant fees based on biased assumptions. I support legislation that acknowledges what the people need are resources, education, and alternative opportunities for work. From my understanding of H7452, there are plans for these supports to replace unnecessary fines, fees, and charges.

The existing law states no justification for these additional fines, which are deposited as 'general revenue'. Considering the state's low arrest rate for prostitution crimes, only 2 in the last 15 years, there cannot be a significant financial benefit for the state. To those people that are arrested, these costs can be debilitating. For that reason, it is critical that Rhode Island eliminate these unnecessary fees, rather than create a financial burden that creates barriers to well-being and keeping oneself afloat.

I am hearing a lot of discussion in this room on the importance of rehabilitation rather than punitive justice and it is imperative to acknowledge that this bill is a step in that direction.