

Decriminalize Sex Work

[www.DecriminalizeSexWork.net](http://www.DecriminalizeSexWork.net)

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### **Florida Senate Considers Creating Prostitution Registry**

Florida Senate Bill 540 with the Orwellian title “Human Trafficking” would create a registry for people found guilty of the loosely defined crime of “soliciting, inducing, enticing, or procuring” another to commit “prostitution, lewdness, or assignation.” Such people, once prosecuted, would be added to a registry entitled “Soliciting for Prostitution Registry.” Registries have long been a dystopian nightmare for sex workers, as stigma against the profession all but guarantees a host of predictable and preventable problems — from future employment discrimination, to ugly custody battles and domestic violence.

This bill, if it becomes a law, would also require any public lodging establishment to train its employees in the dubious skill of spotting “human trafficking.” These notorious trainings are conducted by a tapestry of organizations that profit from the conflation of sex work between consenting adults with trafficking, which is legally defined only when a minor is involved or there is force, fraud, or coercion.

Alex Andrews — co-founder of Sex Worker Outreach Program Behind Bars, a national social justice organization dedicated to the rights of people who face discrimination in the criminal justice system due to the stigma associated with the sex trade — says, “A prostitution registry is yet another legislative knee jerk reaction to a community based problem that will cause far more harm to marginalized members of our community.” Andrews points out that “women are the fastest growing segment of the prison population” and that “policies like this will just make it harder for people to escape a punitive criminal justice system that offers no solutions for people in poverty.”

“This bill is part of a national trend cracking down on the freedom of movement for women, trans people and other overly policed minorities,” said Kaytlin Bailey, Director of Communications for Decriminalize Sex Work. “Historically, efforts to police the oldest profession have resulted in policies that trap the very people these laws are ostensibly supposed

to help.” The mission of Decriminalize Sex Work, a new national organization, is “to end the prohibition of prostitution in the United States.”

Alex Andrews says, “Surely we have evolved from a culture that punishes a human being with a scarlet letter that they can’t escape. Let’s create better and more accessible services for victims and survivors, not force them to sign up for a lifetime of discrimination.” Her organization hopes to see efforts to prevent trafficking redirected to services that might help people escape cycles of poverty instead of punishing them. Kaytlin Bailey adds that “if hotels, airlines, restaurants, and state governments want to crack down on labor trafficking and exploitation I suggest they allow unions to advocate for better working conditions, not sic the police on the most vulnerable.”

Both organizations are a part of the growing sex-workers rights movement. Researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine published research showing that sex workers suffering under repressive policing are three times more likely to experience violence as those who live in countries like New Zealand, where prostitution is no longer a crime. This study bolsters the recommendations and official policies of the World Health Organization, Amnesty International, and the ACLU, all of which support ending criminalization.

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