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New Hampshire Juvenile Sex Trafficking Survivor Urges Representatives to Vote Against Decriminalized Prostitution

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Darlene Pawlik

Dear Honorable Representatives,

I am a juvenile sex trafficking survivor. I was sold here in New Hampshire and other states as well. This is happening now too.

Even with a law against prostitution, the more egregious elements are prevalent. Trafficking is not separate from prostitution, it is just the darker side of the very same coin.

The law is a teacher and its standard is the very least we offer our society in ways of protection from harm. It is a warning that there are consequences to harmful behaviors. Maintaining that prostitution is against the law and not a victimless crime or a private interaction free of adverse impact does help to protect the dignity and safety of NH citizens. Decriminalizing will erode the few safeguards law enforcement can employ. Pimps and buyers, exempt from prosecution, thereby emboldened to use force, fraud or coercion to grow their business will further dehumanize victims.

The state recently received a large amount of money to combat human trafficking. The decriminalization of prostitution will invariably lead to an increase in trafficking as it has been demonstrated in other states. RI has empirical evidence the deleterious effects, see attached. Dubious action of the legislature may be in vogue today, but I pray not in this case.

Real people, human beings with dignity and value are worthy the protection of the law. People should not be sold. People should not be purchased.

You are seated on the committee charged with public safety. This isn't about installing a crosswalk.

This is about violence and slavery. The commodification of human beings, dehumanizing us, is the antithesis of safety. A tool's value is only as long as it remains useful. The average age for sex trafficking boys and girls is 12-14 years and their life span if they remain trafficked is less than 7 more. Being raped multiple times a day leads to tremendous physical and mental health problems. Depression and drug abuse to damage of internal organs and diseases, such as Hepatitis or Tuberculosis cause morbidity and mortality. It's not safe.

Your committee is also specifically involved in defining what is criminal and what constitutes justice.

Is it not criminal to buy and sell human beings? I know we are mostly white people here in NH and it is difficult to actually imagine what it would be like to be sold, actually looked over and purchased like a trinket. But please try. I'm not referring to emotionally here. I mean that if it were you, a human being, what would it be like? Do you think it would be just? Doesn't it offend the Natural Law, which states that we are all created equal?

There can be no euphemisms in this discussion. The truth is that our bodies are our own, to do with them what we please, except to harm others. The law against prostitution makes it clear that prostitution, the buying and selling of human beings to use for sexual pleasure, is not safe, it is not just, and therefore, shall be deemed criminal.

Please retain the standard for the safety and welfare of New Hampshire's people.

Respectfully,

Darlene Pawlik
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