



## SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF COYOTE RI

My name is [Bella Robinson](#). I have been a sex worker for 35 years. I founded COYOTE RI in 2010. Since then I have served as the executive director. COYOTE RI is an organization of sex workers, former sex workers and sex trafficking victims, who advocate for policies that promote the health and safety of sex workers. We conduct participatory research, run focus groups and engage in policy work. We also provide direct services to sex workers and trafficking victims, and we support incarcerated sex workers.

I am writing to you today in opposition of SB3245. This has been implemented in several states and rarely yields many trafficking victims even after the state invests millions of dollars. Because all these networks conflate sex work with trafficking. They create things like “trafficking court” that allow non profits to profit off the backs of criminalized sex workers. Sex workers and 3rd party support staff are the best tool law enforcement has to identify trafficking. All the evidence based research shows that criminalization fuels violence and exploitation. It is common sense when the person can’t come forward and report the abuse without risking being harassed or arrested by the police, that this process gives the abuser all the power. This is nothing more than another money grab at the state level, even though federal TIP funding is funding non profits at over 600 million a year if they 1) Create Awareness About Trafficking 2) Host Public Trainings on How to Spot Trafficking, (encouraging the public to call the police on sex workers.) 3) They can not support decriminalization of prostitution 4) They cant engage with sex worker rights led organizations. [\[link\]](#)

COYOTE has created this [spreadsheet](#) to track this funding. As you can see from these organizations 990 forms, almost all the funding is spent on their salaries, offices and fundraising. They dont spend any money helping “people involved in the sex industry pay their rent, feed thier kids, pay car payments, phone bills, child care or provide them access to a high education without a debt. They do nothing to lift this population out of poverty. They are calling for more mass surveillance to harass and arrest sex workers. Diversion programs are also an extension of the prison industrial complex. Want to Know More About NYC Trafficking Court? Ask a Sex Worker [\[link\]](#)

COYOTE RI has conducted numerous participatory projects, surveying US sex workers. We have conducted focus groups, we have analyzed tens of thousands of pages of charging documents by accessing FOIA requests. ( Below we have provided the links to our archived data.)

1. Pembroke – Sex Work in the US After FOSTA (April 2018-19) Survey Quantitative Data [\[link\]](#)
2. Pembroke- Trafficking and the Sex Industry in the United States Survey 2017 [\[link\]](#)
3. Trafficking and the Sex Industry in Rhode Island Survey- 2014-2016 [\[link\]](#)

4. Youth report - Policing Modern Day Slavery & Carceral Care in Rhode Island. [\[link\]](#)

Our research shows that shamed based counseling is as psychologically damaging as conversation therapy is to LBGT folks. Its problematic that anti trafficking organizations seek to pit sex workers against sex trafficking victims.

In fact Polaris Project the largest trafficking hotline in the US,, refers “people involved in the sex industry” to SWOP Behind Bars, because they have no direct services, even though they are funded at over 7 million a year. Even though Sex worker rights led organizations are underserved and underfunded, we do the best we can to provide services to “people involved in the sex industry” who are in crisis and we direct them to the limited services available for those who want to exit. However that doesn’t solve folks “POVERTY ISSUES”. Most states have housing lists that are years long. Affordable housing is an issue in every state.

If you are serious about the health and safety of “people involved in the sex industry” you would fund your local sex worker rights led organizations, create a legislative study commission that includes sex workers, to devlope polices that promote the health and safety of “people involved in the sex industry.

In light of the above evidence, we ask you to VOTE NO on SB3245

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