



March 6th, 2023

Dear House & Senate Judiciary Committee:

COYOTE RI is writing to you today in strong opposition of SB68 & HB68.

SB66 and HB 68 would make it an unclassified felony, sex trafficking in the first degree, to have a place of prostitution - something all prostitutes who don't work outdoors are guilty of. We saw in the aftermath of the 2012 trafficking bill, when an independent sex worker was charged with trafficking herself, that police and prosecutors can't be trusted to use their discretion to not charge those they say they want to protect. That's why we oppose SB66 and HB68.

House Bill 68 and SB66 also creates a Class B/C felony, not for those who buy sex from sex trafficking victims, but from those who merely solicit someone who meets the definition of a trafficking victim created by this bill, which includes practically every prostitute in Alaska. The bills focus on those who solicit, rather than engage, in a commercial sex act revealing law enforcement's intentions to do sting operations where they pimp out fake victims and then arrest customers for solicitation.

As the sex industry is self regulatory, due to being too criminalized to call the police for help, many of the customers soliciting these fake victims would likely be doing so out of concern, to offer assistance. Customers of actual trafficking victims would risk being charged with a felony if they called the police. This drives sex work and actual sex trafficking further underground, where abuse and violence proliferate. Instead, customers who encounter a sex trafficking victim should be able to call the police and make a report without being arrested at all.

The legislature changed the trafficking statutes in 2016 and 2017. Let's respect their good work.

We oppose SB6 & HB68 and ask you to VOTE NO on them

Bella Robinson

Tara Burns

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COYOTE RI Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, Rhode Island (COYOTE RI) is a group of current and former sex workers and sex trafficking survivors working on "policy" for improved health and safety for people in Rhode Island's sex industry. Learn more at www.coyoteri.org