



March 18, 2025

**RE: Support for S810 - "An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses - Commercial Sexual Activity"**

To the Senate Judiciary Committee,

The Woodhull Freedom Foundation strongly supports S810, which would decriminalize commercial sexual activity. The Woodhull Freedom Foundation is a national human rights organization focused on affirming sexual freedom as a fundamental human right. Since we were founded in 2003, we have always included the fight for recognition of sex workers' fundamental human rights.

Extensive research and evidence shows that decriminalizing sex work will help end human trafficking, improve public health, and promote community safety. In 2023, the "Special Legislative Study Commission Ensuring Racial Equity and Optimizing Health and Safety Laws Affecting Marginalized Individuals" specifically recommended that Rhode Island legislators ensure that "private, consensual sexual activity remains out of the reach of criminal laws". The Commission found that the criminalization of sex work "fuels stigma and discrimination against sex workers, which impedes their access to basic necessities, including healthcare, housing, and other social services." Decriminalizing sex work would allow workers more access to critical services without the harms of criminalization.

This bill would repeal all commercial sexual activity laws while leaving laws against human trafficking on the books. This will bolster anti-trafficking efforts around the state. Prostitution laws make it difficult for victims and witnesses to report exploitation without risking prosecution. They also direct law enforcement resources towards consenting adults, limiting their ability to focus on human trafficking. Additionally, when commercial sexual activity is illegal, it continues to happen - but that criminalization leads to unsafe conditions; it limits sex workers' ability to create safety networks, work together, screen clients, and seek necessary services.

This is a critical moment to address the harm caused by the criminalization of sex work. S810 will create immediate meaningful change for affected communities by addressing overcriminalization, giving sex workers the freedom to support themselves and their families without fear of violence or exploitation, and fostering an environment that allows victims of trafficking to seek safety without risk of arrest. It also has precedent: between 1980 and 2009, indoor prostitution was legal in Rhode Island. During that time period, there was a significant decline in sexually transmitted diseases and sexual assaults within the state.

It is critical that you pass S810 to decriminalize commercial sexual activity in Rhode Island. This policy change will address systemic inequality and create more equitable and safe communities for all.



*Affirming Sexual Freedom as a Fundamental Human Right*

[woodhullfoundation.org](http://woodhullfoundation.org)

Woodhull Freedom Foundation supports S819 and urges the Senate to pass it to affirm further and protect the fundamental human rights of all Rhode Islanders!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ricci J. Levy".

Ricci J. Levy  
President & CEO  
Woodhull Freedom Foundation