

To Chair Williamson, Vice Chair Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of Committee on House Judiciary

I am a resident of Oregon and support of human rights, namely the right to safety for sex workers.

This bill is incredibly important as sex workers are some of the most vulnerable members of community. As a former advocate specializing in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence and sex workers, I first hand witnessed the violence that sex workers experience. Sex Worker's line of work puts them in a marginalized and vulnerable position and people who are abusive often take advantage of that. Right now, sex workers cannot safely report when they get assaulted, attacked, injured by ANY client because they will likely get prosecuted by the police for prostitution or attempted prostitution. This means that if they are exposed to violence they cannot seek protection from law enforcement or even feel safe approaching emergency medical help. Here's an example of the type of violence this community is currently experiencing in the Portland Metro area (and not feeling safe to report.) "March 2019- "Jose" Picked up female worker at C and 82nd, paid for a date then pulled a gun and stole all workers money" "March 2017- Thin 6ft white male, several reports of this man raping and holding workers in his basement for several hours." These reports are from the Portland Bad Date Line, an institution run by advocates to help sex workers have an outlet to make reports and keep each other safe without having to risk their own personal legal danger. Passing this bill would allow the basic human right for a vulnerable community to seek the same minimum level of protection all people have in OR without backlash.

It's well documented that sex workers experience higher rates of violence. Serial killer Gary Ridgeway specifically targeted sex workers in the Pacific Northwest - murdering at least 49 women - and he is quoted as saying "I picked prostitutes because I thought I could kill as many of them as possible without getting caught." Oregon has a chance to correct this thought pattern and increase the protection of sex workers. Please do the right thing and pass this bill. I support SB596

Sincerely,
Becky Barryte