

A Resolution in Support of Increased Safety for Sex Workers

WHEREAS: The criminalization of sex work in Massachusetts has left sex workers vulnerable to both state and interpersonal violence, subjecting them to exploitation, incarceration, disenfranchisement, and a lack of worker rights; and

WHEREAS: This City Council recognizes the difference between sex trafficking and sex work as well as understands that sex workers, like all workers, use their bodily autonomy to pursue economic stability; and

WHEREAS: An Act to Prevent Human Trafficking and Improve the Health and Safety of Sex Workers (S.1046 and H.1758) would increase the safety of sex workers by creating a limited amnesty to report crimes without fear of arrest for sex work, simple drug possession, loitering, soliciting, or trespassing; repealing a third strike law for “common nightwalking” that requires jail time; and establishing a Human Trafficking Prevention and Sex Worker Project to study the decriminalization of sex work in Massachusetts as well as what legal protections and services should be made available to improve the health of sex workers; and

WHEREAS: The committee to study decriminalizing sex work would include representation from sex workers, the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Massachusetts, and from organizations advocating for survivors of sex trafficking, transgender people, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated LGBTQ+ people, racial justice, harm reduction, and undocumented people; and

WHEREAS: The Human Trafficking Prevention and Sex Worker Project would also allocate resources to populations at risk of human trafficking as well as establish an interagency committee to develop and implement a strategic plan to prevent and eliminate human trafficking; and

WHEREAS: There are other bills in the the state legislature, including An Act to Strengthen Justice and Support for Sex Trade Survivors (H.1597 and S.983), which sex workers have said would make them more unsafe and go against the recommendations of international human rights organizations; and

WHEREAS: An Act to Prevent Human Trafficking and Improve the Health and Safety of Sex Workers has been informed and endorsed by organizations made up of sex workers, including the Boston Sex Workers and Allies Collective (BSWAC); and

WHEREAS: The prohibition on sex work has never eliminated sex work and has instead only eliminated safe and legal pathways for sex workers to exist; **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council supports the passage of An Act to Prevent Human Trafficking and Improve the Health and Safety of Sex Workers (H.1597 and S.983) and urges our state house delegation to support these bills.