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## **SEX TRADE SURVIVORS, LEGISLATORS, PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS & ADVOCATES HOLD BRIEFING ON SEX TRADE SURVIVORS ACT (H.1597/S.983)**

*Bill Ends Criminalization of People Being Bought & Sold...While Holding Exploiters, Abusers, Brothel Owners & Buyers Accountable*

**(Boston, MA)** – Today, local sex trade Survivor Leaders, lawmakers, public safety officials, advocates and allies held a legislative briefing on the Sex Trade Survivors Act (H.1597 / S.983) - a survivor-led, comprehensive, and proven approach to reducing commercial sexual exploitation.

The Sex Trade Survivors Act will bring about partial decriminalization – otherwise known as *The Equality Model*. It will end the arrest and criminalization of people being bought and sold in the sex trade, while expanding access to critical resources for those who want to exit those circumstances. The legislation also maintains current anti-trafficking laws, by continuing to hold exploiters, abusers, brothel owners and buyers accountable and criminally responsible for the devastating harm they cause.

*The Equality Model* seeks to drive down the demand for commercial sex, the very engine fueling sex trafficking and violent exploitation. This successful approach has been proven to better support people in the sex trade and help them exit the industry. Moreover, it is an essential tool to prevent trafficking. First pioneered in Sweden in 1999, *The Equality Model* has been shown to not only provide greater protection for the most vulnerable people in the sex trade, but also deter and prevent trafficking by targeting the demand for commercial sex. Additionally, this approach has already been successfully implemented in countries such as France, Norway, Canada, Israel, Iceland, and Ireland.

Here in Massachusetts, H.1597 / S.983 comes on the heels of a great victory in New England this Summer, in which Maine became the first state in the nation to enact an *Equality Model* law. Massachusetts can continue the progress by leading the way and ensuring that those in prostitution are not punished, but rather have

access to critical services, which will benefit their safety, health and ability to thrive long-term.

"There is incredible support for the Sex Trade Survivors Act from Survivor Leaders across the Commonwealth," *said Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier*. "It is time that we pass H.1597 to break cycles of trauma and exploitation in Massachusetts. This comprehensive bill includes access to critical resources for those who are seeking to exit the sex trade."

"The Sex Trade Survivors Act is a common sense approach to addressing commercial sexual exploitation in the Commonwealth by ensuring victims are not criminalized and that there is a path towards safety for survivors," *said Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan*.

"Massachusetts needs to pass the Sex Trade Survivors Act. This legislation would ensure that survivor voices are heard, cycles of oppression are broken, and gender-based violence is disrupted," *said Audrey Morrissey, My Life My Choice, and Audra Doody, Safe Exit Initiative (SEI)* "This legislation will provide critical services for people who want to exit the sex trade and, in doing so, begin to dismantle intergenerational and racial trauma."

"No one should be punished for their own exploitation. Massachusetts has a golden opportunity to both make this common-sense, survivor-supported solution a reality and make things safer for so many people and communities," *said Alisa Bernard, National Campaign Manager for World Without Exploitation*. "Building on Maine's success, Massachusetts has a real chance to continue the progress here in the Bay State, in New England and throughout the country."

H.1597/S.983 is sponsored by Senator Lydia Edwards, Senator Cindy Friedman, Representative Mary Keefe and Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier.