

Dear Senators,

I've lived in Portland, Oregon most of my life, as have my previous four generations of family. We've been farmers and homemakers, secretaries, hair stylists and teachers. I've made a home here for my own children, who attend Portland public schools. I've served on the board of Our House of Portland for several years and I'm also an ambassador for the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation. I am invested in my hometown and in my state. I'm also invested in the health and well-being, not only of people living with HIV, but all members of our state, country and world. My work in HIV stigma reduction and health care advocacy brings me close to all walks of life and many issues of criminalization, which leads me to my plea.

I urge you to pass SB 596, and provide amnesty to sex workers who wish to report crimes that occurred during the course of sex work that would be categorized as criminal under current local, state, or federal law.

Sex workers disproportionately represent already marginalized communities. Prostitution charges can trigger a series of other state interventions, putting entire families at risk and creating harmful lingering ties to the criminal legal system.

For example, when sex workers are victims of violence, they can't seek medical treatment without fear of mandatory reporting to police by medical providers. This, combined with the practice of prosecutors to use condoms as evidence, lays the foundations for a public health crisis.

This bill will prohibit discrimination in reporting, empowering vulnerable Oregonian families to seek the justice they are entitled to and thereby increasing the safety of all our communities.

I urge you to vote on behalf of your marginalized constituents who have no voice. Thank you for your vote, and let me know how else I can be of service to our cause.

Thank you,
Laela Wilding