

To Chair Williamson, Vice-Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and Members of the Oregon House Judiciary Committee:

I am a resident of Oregon and a supporter of human rights, including the rights of sex workers to safe working conditions and access to public safety systems. I write to you today in support of SB596, currently under consideration before your committee.

The bill before your committee is important because sex workers are some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Their line of work puts them in close contact with people from all backgrounds, often in less than safe settings. Under current Oregon law, sex workers can be, and often are, charged with and prosecuted for prostitution or attempted prostitution after reporting when they are themselves assaulted, attacked, or injured by clients, or when they witness crimes against others, including other sex workers, in the course of their work. This discourages sex workers from seeking protection from emergency services, including law enforcement and medical assistance, on behalf of themselves or others.

SB596 would allow sex workers to seek emergency services, including law-enforcement and medical care, without fear of being prosecuted for prostitution or attempted prostitution, when reporting a person felony. Passing this bill would promote, within a vulnerable community, the right to seek a level of protection all Oregonians have and most of us take for granted, without fear of backlash. It would also have the salutary effect of decreasing the incidence of violent crime against sex workers, which is frequently committed precisely because criminals rely upon the vulnerability of that community to ensure the silence of their victims.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter, and for your support of the right of our sex working citizens to safety at work, through your vote in support of SB596.

Matthew Green