Written evidence submitted by Darryl Perry

At the August 2015 International Council Meeting of Amnesty International, “[d]elegates from around the world authorized the International Board to develop and adopt a policy on the issue [of sex workers rights].” Amnesty International reported, “The resolution recommends that Amnesty International develop a policy that supports the full decriminalization of all aspects of consensual sex work. The policy will also call on states to ensure that sex workers enjoy full and equal legal protection from exploitation, trafficking and violence.”

Bella Robinson, the executive director of the Rhode Island chapter of Coyote (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), recently told a New Hampshire legislative committee, “The main reason I want to see prostitution decriminalized is because it is the only harm reduction model proven to reduce violence and exploitation in the sex industry.”

Robinson went on to explain how criminalization of sex work actually creates a dangerous situation for prostitutes, because they are unable to call the police if they are robbed, assaulted, or raped. In New Zealand, which passed the Prostitution Reform Act decriminalizing all aspects of adult prostitution in 2003, the country has “just about rid the sex industry of exploitation. Sex Workers reported that they had better relationships with the police.”

Robinson also mentioned the case of a woman who was able to sue a client for failure to pay for services rendered, something that would not be possible if the service was illegal. Adding that “Criminalization of prostitution is a failed policy. It hasn't stopped anyone from buying or selling sex.” She also pointed out the absurdity of attempting to regulate selling a service that is completely legal to give away for free.

Representatives from the US Prostitutes Collective and All Women Count also spoke to the committee, urging the legislators to repeal the laws prohibiting prostitution among consenting adults.

The so-called Nordic model seeks to criminalize the attempted purchase, but not solicitation, of sexual services. The Nordic model is just as bad as the current outright prohibition, because it allows law enforcement to interfere with their business. Robinson added, “Sex Workers need equal protection under the law... [and] need to be able to report violence and exploitation to the police, without fearing that they are in danger of being arrested and further persecution.”

Sex workers rights is an important issue and the legislative hearings provide an opportunity for the important conversation about the rights (or lack thereof) of sex workers. As with all issues of human freedom, I support the full decriminalization of all aspects of consensual sex work!