



MYTH

The Community Safety and Health Amendment Act would legalize sex work and create red-light districts in the District of Columbia.



FACT

The Community Safety and Health Amendment Act simply decriminalizes—or removes criminal penalties for—consensual sex exchange between adults. Legalization entails a complicated government regulatory structure and could lead to the creation of “red light” districts. Decriminalization does not preclude common sense labor, health, and safety regulations.



MYTH

Decriminalization of sex work will lead to an insatiable demand for buying sex that will increase “sex tourism” and minors forced into sexual exchange.



FACT

A study completed in 2012 following New Zealand’s 2003 decriminalization of sex work concluded that “the number of sex workers, and those workers underage, does not appear to have significantly changed.”



MYTH

Without criminal penalties for sex work, police cannot stop human trafficking or help those, especially minors, who are being forced into sex work.



FACT

Decriminalizing sex work leaves in place protections for minors & all laws prohibiting coercion, exploitation, and human trafficking. It also makes it easier to identify and stop human trafficking by allowing those involved in sexual exchange to more readily report when someone is being coerced or exploited to authorities without fear of being prosecuted themselves.



MYTH

The Community Safety and Health Amendment Act legalizes pimping and brothels in the District of Columbia.



FACT

The Community Safety and Health Amendment Act does not legalize brothels or “pimps”. By law, anyone who utilizes force, fraud, or coercion to get another person involved in the sex industry is a trafficker. While “pimp” is a particularly racialized term, most people associate it with coercion or exploitation, which would remain criminalized.



MYTH

Decriminalizing sex workers while still criminalizing buyers, or “johns”, would reduce the demand for sex workers and improve their safety.



FACT

Criminalizing buyers who are purchasing sexual services from a consenting adult forces sex workers to be complicit in criminal activity and does not improve safety for sex workers. It gives sex workers less time to screen dangerous clients or negotiate safe sex practices in order to protect buyers.