



# HUMAN SERVICES & VETERANS COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

4:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

**The Human Services and Veterans Committee will hold a public hearing to discuss Policy Order 2025 #46 on sex trafficking. This discussion will allow for stakeholders and other community members to raise awareness and share resources important to keeping individuals safe and free of harm.**

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Human Services and Veterans Committee was held on Wednesday, May 28, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 4:00 p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Wilson. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

**At the request of the Co-Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

- Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

**Present – 5. Quorum established.**

Co-Chair Wilson offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss Policy Order 2025 #46 on sex trafficking and to allow for stakeholders and other community members to raise awareness and share resources important to keeping individuals safe and free of harm. Present at the meeting from the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) were Superintendent Frederick Cabral, Deputy Superintendent Michael Logan, Deputy Superintendent Michael Medeiros, and, Kimberly Sansoucy, Women’s Commission. Police Commissioner, Christine Elow, was present via Zoom. Also present at the meeting were Mayor Simmons and Councillor Zusy.

In addition to City Staff, the following panelists were present, Clara Fennel, Title Nine Aureila Advocates, Madeline Nournbeg, Title Nine Aurelia Advocates, Emily Anne Winther, Title Nine Aurelia Advocates, Audrey Morrissey, EMMA and My Life My Choice, Audra Doody, EMMA and Safe Exit Initiative, Dr. Mary Speta, Amirah, Inc. and EMMA, Shameka Gregory, Domestic and Gender Based Violence Initiative Prevention, Dawn Sauma, Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK), Madison Crees, BSWAC, Mary Carol, BSWAC, Sarah Gyorog, Transition House, Chet Harding, Amirah, Inc. and EMMA, and Jessica Van Meir, BSWAC.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized panelists from Title Nine Aurelia Advocates who shared their efforts towards creating a consent culture within Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School (CRLS) and across the City. The team highlighted how important it is to educate on sexual violence while also promoting boundaries, creating a

safe space, and holding people accountable for their actions. The panelists stressed how important it is for leaders, adults, and student peers to help make Cambridge a safe place where sexual violence is not normalized.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Dr. Mary Speta who provided an overview of their efforts and research to address the sex trade. They pointed out that there are three main components of the sex trade; sex trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and consensual sex work, and provided a review of each, noting that consensual sex work represents only a small portion of the sex trade. Dr. Speta offered information related to the demographic of people involved in sex trade and why people are driven towards sex trade, and the challenges that are faced when trying to exit sex trade. In addition, Dr. Speta provided information related to systemic injustices, such as racism and economic discrimination, and noted that those in sex trade face discrimination towards housing, employment, and healthcare.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Audrey Morrissey who shared information related to child sexual exploitation, noting that it affects communities throughout Massachusetts, including Cambridge. Audrey Morrissey offered comments related to systematic racism not only in the mainstream world, but within the commercial sex industry, adding that the vulnerable populations are affected the most. They shared that within their 22 years of work both with children and adults, they have never met anyone who was in sex trade because they wanted to be, but because they were trapped by abuse, lack of opportunities, or desperation. Audrey Morrissey highlighted the mission of My Life My Choice, sharing that they offer services and support to those impacted by sex trade and for those who want to make a change in their life.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Dawn Sauma who shared that their organization is the only multicultural coalition serving Asian victims of sexual violence, noting that for many victims, this organization is the only point of contact for help. Dawn Sauma provided an overview of the services the organization provides, such as shelter and legal help, and stressed how important it is to have access to safety and help that provide and support cultural backgrounds and languages. Dawn Sauma provided insight into Asian trafficking victims and how they are controlled by their handlers, sharing how it is hard for authorities to identify them as victims. Dawn Sauma echoed comments made by previous speakers related to sex trafficking in systemic environments, such as poverty.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Audrey Doody who shared that she was a survivor of prostitution and sex trade and founded Safe Exit Initiative, which supports people impacted by sex trade, regardless of their current situation. Audrey Doody explained the connection between substance use, mental health, and how involvement with sex trade is related. Audrey Doody stressed the importance of prioritizing the most vulnerable individuals when having these conversations and not just the small percentage who may say it is a choice.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Dr. Speta who provided a brief overview of the legislative landscape and opportunities for advocacy in Massachusetts and shared information on the Sex Trade Survivors Act, H.1683/S.116. (Attachment A)

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Madison Crees who gave a presentation titled “Only Rights Will Stop the Wrongs – Addressing the Needs of Sex Workers in Cambridge”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Audrey Morrissey who spoke on the importance of educating youth, adults, and teachers on what exploitation looks and that prevention is a community effort.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Dawn Sauma who stressed the challenges for justice and safety for Asian victims of trafficking and the importance of partnerships with culturally specific organizations to assist those looking for help and support. Additionally, Dawn Sauma shared how important it is for improved data collection to better understand the needs of victims and deliver services effectively.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Dr. Speta who shared how important it is for Cambridge to provide services to those who have been trafficked or involved in sex trade, noting that many individuals need travel to other cities for support. Dr. Speta provided examples of services that could be helpful, such as drop-in centers or overnight shelters, which could have a positive impact. Dr. Speta proposed that the City Council adopt a policy related to

ethics for public employees and elected officials, which should be reviewed annually to ensure people are upheld to professional standards and accountability.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Sarah Gyorog who reviewed a recent community survey, related to recent cases involving exploitation, which received over 100 responses so far, noting the survey remains open (Attachment B). Sarah Gyorog indicated that one key takeaway from the survey was that the community expects accountability from the City and its officials and urged the City Council to rebuild the community's trust by acknowledging and responding to concerns.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Shameka Gregory who thanked the Committee for having her participate in the discussion and learn from the different organizations present at the table. Shameka Gregory emphasized that it is a complex issue, but the City has a responsibility to make ethical decisions that help towards efforts that prevent violence and exploitation. Shameka Gregory pointed out that support also includes essentials like healthcare, food, and housing. Shameka Gregory shared that she is a resource to be used and looks forward to more discussions about building support systems.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Jessican Van Meir shared an overview of their research on sex work and trafficking, as well as working with victims of sexual abuse and trafficking. Jessica Van Meir noted that New Zealand, parts of Australia, and Belgium, decriminalized sex work and granted labor rights, which improved safety, access to health care, and legal protection for sex workers. Jessica Van Meir pointed out that economic need, not coercion, is the primary reason most people enter sex work. Jessica Van Meir who added that many human rights groups support the full decriminalization of sex work.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Chet Harding who shared how important it is to involve men in addressing sex trade, educating them, and becoming part of the solution. Chet Harding encouraged more male voices and community engagement in the efforts towards sex trade.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Kimberly Sansoucy who addressed the recent brothel case in Cambridge and pointed out that it should not be seen as an isolated event. Kimberly Sansoucy addressed systemic inequalities and suggested a survivor-centered approach to address sexual exploitation in Cambridge. Kimberly Sansoucy stressed the importance of making everyone's safety a priority by having these difficult conversations.

Co-Chair Wilson thanked everyone for participating in the discussion, noting that it was not intended to be a debate on what is right versus what is wrong, but to share information and raise awareness in the community.

**Co-Chair Wilson made a motion to extend the meeting by fifteen minutes.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

**Yes – 5. Motion passed.**

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Nolan who noted the importance of continuing the conversation around sex work, exploitation, and community safety. Councillor Nolan shared she would be in favor of finding a balance between different legislative approaches, affirming that you do not want to create unintended consequences, such as causing more harm to victims through legalization. Councillor Nolan shared she looked forward to future conversations involving public safety and organizations to create collaborative efforts and policy.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Co-Chair McGovern who asked for clarification regarding legislation and the status of the Bills. Dr. Speta reviewed and provided an update related to the The Sex Trade Survivors Act and shared which Bills the EMMA Coalition did and did not support. Mary Carol provided updates on Bills that BSWAC supported.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who shared appreciation for the conversation and the education that was provided to listeners. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler noted that it is important for the City to continue to have these conversations, adding that the criminalization of sex work could increase risk and danger.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked about funding and money involved in the efforts towards decriminalizing sex work. Dr. Speta responded by providing information related to the CASSIE Bill in Massachusetts. Jessica Van Meir responded by sharing that sex worker rights organizations are underfunded and have can have limited resources, noting that BSWAC is completely run by volunteers. Councillor Siddiqui shared that it is important for local government to have a clear understanding on what they are able or not able to do to set expectations within the community and promote transparency.

Co-Chair Wilson recognized Co-Chair McGovern who thanked everyone for their participation, noting that the discussion was very informative. Co-Chair McGovern shared that this is the first step for the City Council to engage with this topic with organizations and stakeholders and looks forward to future conversations. Co-Chair Wilson echoed Co-Chair McGovern's comments and stressed the importance of continuing research to support Bills and policies that are being discussed. Co-Chair Wilson agreed that there should be continued conversation and continued collaboration to support and provide safety to impacted people.

**Co-Chair Wilson opened Public Comment.**

W D, resident of NorthEast, spoke in favor of decriminalizing sex work and shared their experiences and research on the topic.

Mary Carol, Boston, MA, BSWAC, read a statement from a member of the organization related to sex work and spoke in favor of decriminalizing.

Jessica Van Meir, 84 Line Street, Somerville, MA, read a statement from a victim of human sex trafficking.

Siobhan McDonough, 205 Walden Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of sex work decriminalization.

Nina Torres, 9 Dane Street, shared how sex work has helped them heal and become independent.

Sascha Cohen, Cambridgeport, offered comments related to creating policy and decriminalizing sex work.

Ryan Black, 65 Chetwynd Road, read a statement from a sex worker who wanted to remain anonymous.

Crystal Huff, 52 Elm Street, spoke in favor of decriminalizing sex work and read a statement from a former sex worker.

Caty Simon, 123 Cabot Street, Holyoke, MA, spoke in favor of decriminalizing sex work and providing resources for workers.

Sarah Bazarian, 268 Willow Avenue, BSWAC, read a statement from a victim of human sex trafficking.

JT Scott, 269 Washington, Somerville, MA, spoke in support of consent culture and offered comments related to creating policy.

**Co-Chair Wilson recognized Councillor Siddiqui who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Absent

Councillor Wilson – Yes

**Yes – 3, No – 0, Absent – 2. Motion passed.**

**The Human Services and Veterans Committee adjourned at approximately 6:19p.m.**

**Attachment A** – Handout on The Sex Trade Survivors Act.

**Attachment B** – Handout on Transition House 2025 Listening Sessions.

**Attachment C** – Communications from the public.

**Clerk's Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1036?view\\_id=1&redirect=true](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1036?view_id=1&redirect=true)

**That the Human Services and Veterans Committee hold a meeting to discuss Sex Work and Sex Trafficking.**

**A communication was received from Boston Sex Workers and Allies Collective (BSWAC), transmitting a presentation titled "Only Rights Will Stop The Wrongs - Addressing the Needs of Sex Workers in Cambridge".**

# The Sex Trade Survivors Act

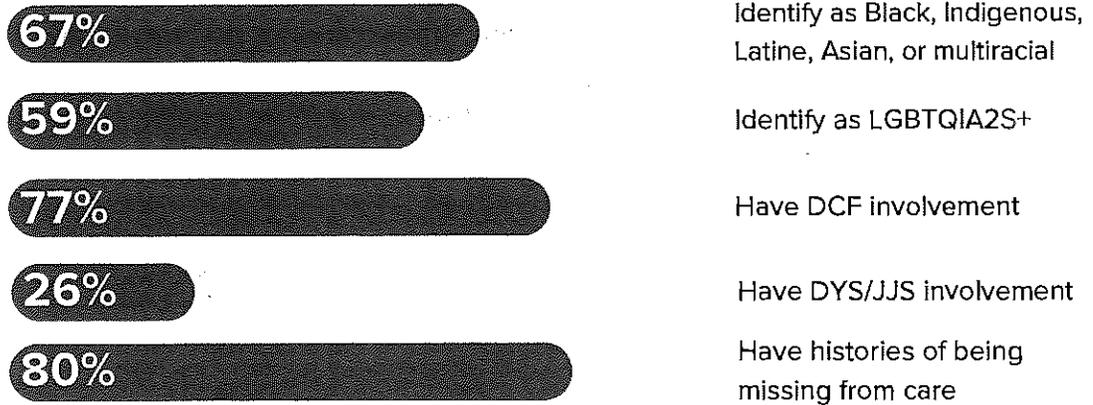
An Act to Strengthen Justice and Support for Sex Trade Survivors

Fact Sheet

## YOUTH WHO ARE MARGINALIZED ARE AT HIGHEST RISK FOR COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

Of Massachusetts youth served by My Life My Choice and Safe Exit Initiative : <sup>1</sup>

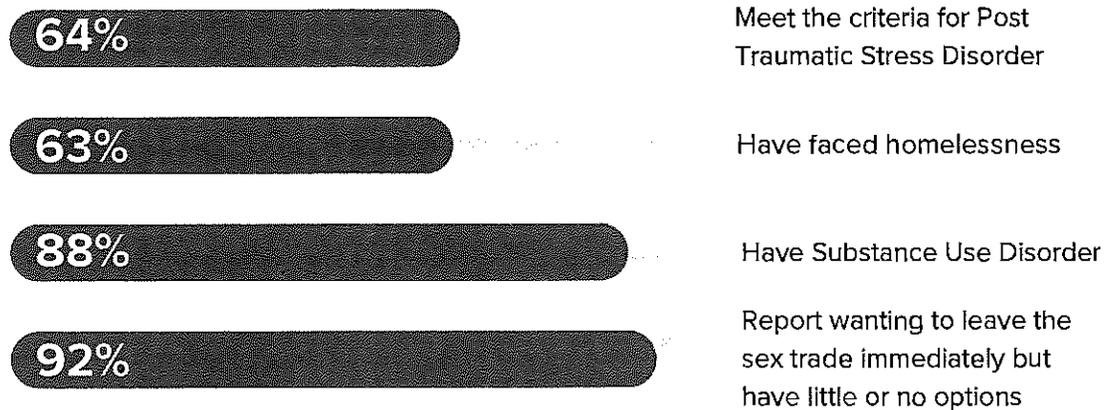
**13** is the average age of first exploitation



*“According to service providers, factors leading women and girls to be vulnerable to exploitation in the sex trade cluster in four main categories: economic insecurity, housing insecurity, education, and migration.” <sup>2</sup>*

## THE MAJORITY OF ADULTS IN THE COMMERCIAL SEX INDUSTRY FACE PROFOUND BARRIERS TO EXIT

Of Massachusetts adults served by Safe Exit Initiative, Amirah Inc, and RIA Inc: <sup>3</sup>



info@emmacoalition.org



<sup>1</sup> My Life My Choice, Massachusetts, 2025 | <sup>2</sup> Mchwarz, et al. 2019 | <sup>3</sup> Safe Exit Initiative Worcester, MA, 2025; Amirah Inc, Beverly, MA 2025; RIA Inc, Framingham, MA 2024

H.1683 / S.1116

# The Sex Trade Survivors Act

## An Act to Strengthen Justice and Support for Sex Trade Survivors

**Lead Sponsors: Representatives Keefe and Farley-Bouvier and Senator Friedman**

**An Act to Strengthen Justice and Support for Sex Trade Survivors (H.1683 / S.1116)** is a survivor-led and proven approach to reducing commercial sexual exploitation and systems of prostitution. This bill removes archaic offenses from the criminal code, broadens vacatur and expungement for people who have experienced human trafficking, and establishes an interagency commission to expand access to critical resources for people being bought and sold in the sex trade — overwhelmingly women and girls, and disproportionately BIPOC and LGBTQIA2S+ individuals.

In Massachusetts, this bill would:

### REPEAL ARCHAIC OFFENSES

Repeals the crimes of common nightwalking and streetwalking, and provides expungement for those with these existing convictions.

### ADVANCE CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

- Broadens the existing human trafficking vacatur provision to allow greater access for survivors of trafficking;
- Requires expungement of convictions vacated on the basis of having been a victim of human trafficking so that survivors' criminal records are no longer a barrier to future opportunities.

### CREATE AN INTERAGENCY SPECIAL COMMISSION

This commission will publish recommendations on existing programming for people in the sex trade and current prevention efforts. This report will recommend ways to improve access to housing, healthcare, education, job training, legal assistance, and compensation for survivors, provide strategies for education and prevention campaigns, and recommend ways to increase organizations' ability to support people with lived and living experience.

# MASSACHUSETTS NEEDS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE SEX TRADE BECAUSE OF ITS INHERENT VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION

**87%** of people engage in commercial sex purely for survival due to a lack of economic alternatives or because they are being trafficked.<sup>4</sup>

Women in the sex trade have **higher mortality rates** than non-prostituted women of comparable age and health.<sup>5</sup>

**Barriers to exit** include **financial barriers, substance abuse relapse, and lack of support from professionals.**<sup>6</sup>

Sex buyers are responsible for **57-100% of homicides** according to aggregate analysis of prostitution-related homicides by U.S. geographic area.<sup>7</sup>

**Criminal records** are a major barrier to financial independence and make it challenging for survivors to break ties completely with the sex trade.<sup>8</sup>

Rates of murder are **18X** higher for people involved in street prostitution than the non-sex-trading population.<sup>9</sup>

**Research shows** that **criminal record relief** and **access to professional services** designed to support independence directly contribute to the ability to **exit the sex trade** and **avoid trafficking revictimization.**<sup>10</sup>

## SEX BUYERS HOLD PRIVILEGE AND POWER OVER THE PEOPLE THEY BUY

Sex buyers are **predominately men** and annually earn<sup>11</sup>

**\$140K+**

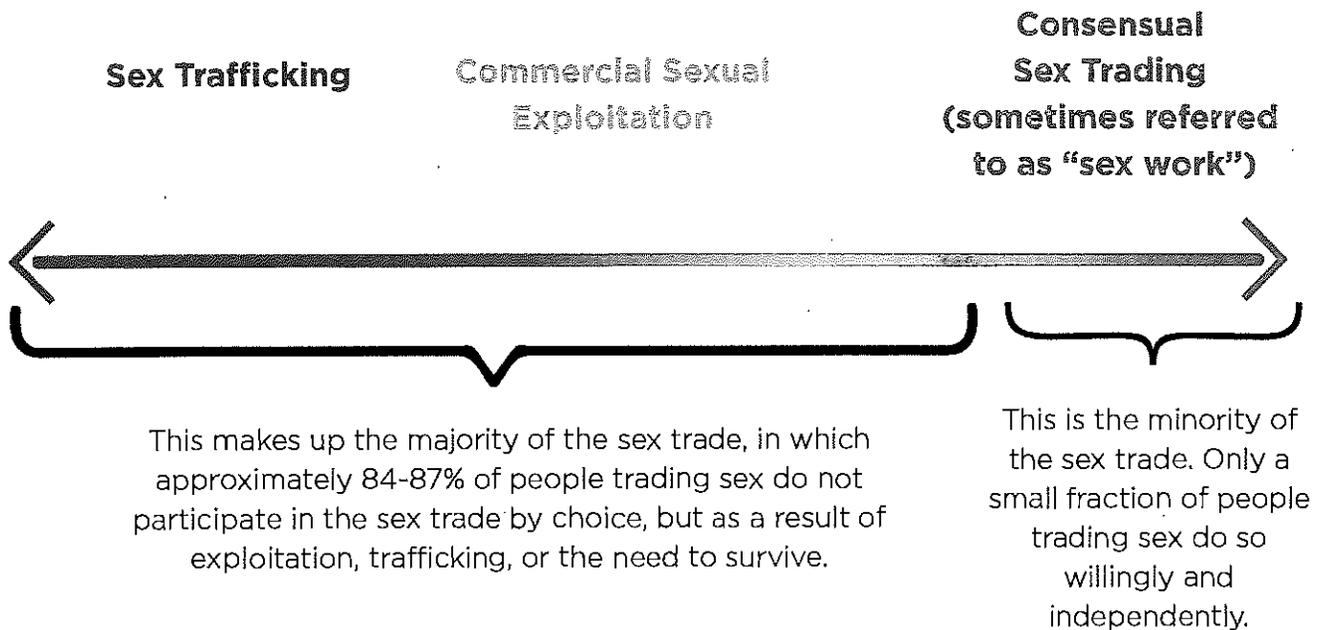
Sex buyers report greater likelihood to **rape**, perpetuate **sexual aggression**, minimize the impact of **violence against women**, and view women trading sex as

***intrinsically less human.***<sup>12</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Farley et al., 2004 | <sup>5</sup> Salfati et al., 2008 | <sup>6</sup> Gonzalez et al., 2019 | <sup>7</sup> Brewer et al., 2006 | <sup>8</sup> Ferrari, 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2019 | <sup>9</sup> Potterat et al., 2004 | <sup>10</sup> Baker et al., 2010; Roe-Sepowitz et al., 2011; Sukach et al., 2018; | <sup>11</sup> Milrod & Montro, 2012 | <sup>12</sup> Farley et al., 2017

## Important Definitions\*

- Sex trafficking: recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age (TVPA).
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation: encompasses both acts of sex trafficking and exploitation of individuals not included in the legal definition of sex trafficking.
- Consensual sex trading: sex trading in which the person trading sex has an economic alternative and is not vulnerable to exploitation.



\*Taken from "Sex Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Prevention, Advocacy, and Trauma-Informed Practice" by Dr. Lara B. Garassi and Dr. Andrea J. Nichols, 2018, Springer Publishing

# 2025 LISTENING SESSIONS

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK CAMBRIDGE BROTHEL CASE

Transition House surveyed over 100 community members from across Cambridge about how to stop sexual exploitation in Cambridge. This survey covered:

- Healing and justice
- What accountability should look like
- What the City can do to help people who are harmed
- How to stop this from happening in the future

### Data Reveals Central Themes

#### **Loss of trust and public integrity**

Over 80% of respondents expressed a deep erosion of trust in elected officials. The incident has:

- Shaken public confidence in City of Cambridge leadership.
- Raised questions about moral accountability & ethical standards for those in power in our City.
- Signaled a lack of transparency in how misconduct is addressed.

People lost trust in elected leaders - it sends a message that some people are above the law.

#### **Calls for Clear Accountability**

There is strong consensus that restorative justice must include concrete consequences.

- 87% of respondents request to establish or strengthen ethical rules and codes of conduct for Cambridge City Council members.
- Financial penalties for sex buyers that directly support survivor services.
- Transparent disciplinary processes and public communication.

Accountability means more than apologies. It means policy change and consequences.

# 2025 LISTENING SESSIONS

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK CAMBRIDGE BROTHEL CASE

### **Prevention and Education**

Respondents want the City to proactively address sexual exploitation through:

- Funding survivor support programs.
- Education on consent and trafficking in schools and communities.
- Creating preventive infrastructure, such as a school, focused on rehabilitation.

Teach the community about trafficking and exploitation; not just punish it after it happens.

### **Misinformation and Community Harm**

Several responses mentioned the harm of misinformation and emphasized the need for:

- Honest, accurate communication from the City.
- Community education about the realities of exploitation and trafficking.
- Spaces for public healing and dialogue.

The misinformation about this case has done extensive damage to survivors and their allies.

### **Desire for Survivor-Centered Responses**

People emphasized that survivors' voices must be centered in any response. This includes:

- Consulting survivor-led organizations.
- Investing in long-term support and trauma-informed care.
- Publicly affirming a zero-tolerance stance on exploitation by committed by officials.

Survivors need to know that their experiences matter and that the City is taking concrete steps to protect them — not just in words, but in policies, funding, and leadership.

# 2025 LISTENING SESSIONS

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK CAMBRIDGE BROTHEL CASE

### Selection of direct quotes from respondents

“It should certainly start by calling what happened by its name instead of sweeping it under the rug.”

“The misinformation about this case has done extreme damage, the general public has limited or false understanding of what sex trafficking and exploitation even is.”

“Community members need to be educated on the facts of this case. All evidence points to the fact that the survivors in this case were not consenting to services offered by the men running this brothel. Paul Toner specifically asked for a "service" after he was explicitly told that the women in this brothel were unaware of the service he was paying for. Paul Toner is not facing enough pressure from the community at large because many are choosing to believe this was consensual sex work. But it was not; it was human trafficking.”

“Time to change the toner! PT should step down immediately in order to save the Council's reputation and avoid any further distractions from important city business.”

### Assessing the Data

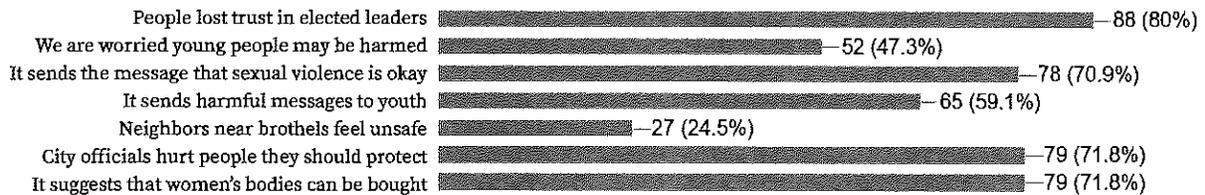
On the next page are three bar graphs summarizing the community feedback:

- **Impact on the Community:** Most respondents feel a loss of trust in elected officials and a perception that certain people are above accountability.
- **Accountability Measures:** There's strong support for new ethical rules and restorative justice approaches, including financial penalties for sex buyers.
- **Prevention Strategies:** Community members call for survivor support funding, education about trafficking, and broader public awareness efforts.

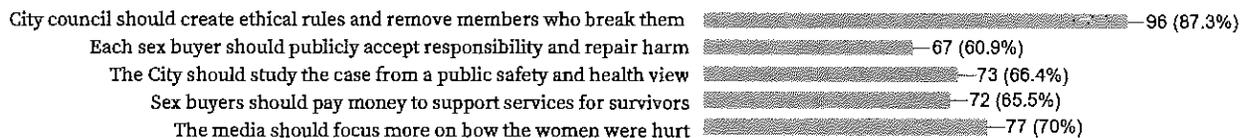
# 2025 LISTENING SESSIONS

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK CAMBRIDGE BROTHEL CASE

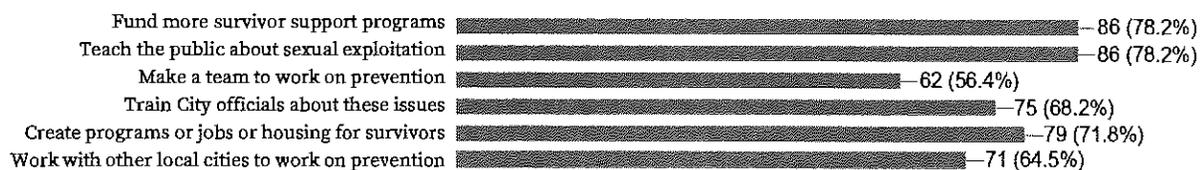
How has this case impacted you or our community?



Accountability is part of restorative justice. What response would be most important to you?



What should the City of Cambridge do to prevent sexual exploitation?



# Attachment C

Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Boston SWAC <bostonswac@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 2:33 AM  
**To:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** Testimony for Policy Order 46 - #2  
**Attachments:** M. testimony.pdf

Hello,

Please find attached another testimony we received from an anonymous sex worker which we read at the Committee on Veterans and Human Services meeting on sex work and sex trafficking today. I hope it's not too late for it to be included, I needed to obtain their consent for it to be shared on public record first! Another may be coming tomorrow (waiting for confirmation of their consent as well).

Best,

Jessica

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**Boston Sex Workers and Allies Collective (BSWAC)**

Website: <https://www.bswac.org/>

Twitter: [@bostonswac](https://twitter.com/bostonswac)



May 28, 2025

Testimony from an anonymous local sex worker, shared with the Boston Sex Workers and Allies Collective (BSWAC)

Sex work is and has been a spectrum, with many observers or people not providing or using services drawing a somewhat arbitrary line of where or when its acceptable. The narrative that sex work for survival is somehow less shameful than by choice has been harmful to me personally. As someone who is disabled and struggles working a standard shift based job without drastic health repercussions, sex work has given me back agency and the ability to access treatment and management for my disability. Often times, when explained, people somehow find my sex work excusable, while anyone who does it for other reasons, or by pure preference might not be granted the same grace. Ultimately, sex work is work, whether it be full service or virtual, and the criminal blanket put on the industry only gives onlookers space to hold a moral judge, as well as arbitrary reporting and blackmail power over those in the industry. I started in this field as a young adult, and have found the interactions and financial freedom gained from it to be empowering and beneficial for my health, mental and physically. Decriminalizing sex work, for clients and providers alike, would serve to reduce shame surrounding dangerous interactions, and allow more safety measures to be put in place. I have met with clients for years, as well as been in the traditional online dating scene. Over these years, the interactions where I was physically unsafe occurred dramatically more without the context of sex work or clients. I have am privileged to have not had a safety issue with a client directly, but have not been safe in some cases in the dating scene. I am strikingly aware that my ability to report or access resources following these attacks were largely due to them being outside of the realm of my work. Had those happened with a client, I would not be afforded the same resources or help. Thank you for your time, and I encourage you to consider that acceptance or respect for only some situations is harmful to all who are within the industry.

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Will D <kwd@ishtarcollective.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 28, 2025 6:45 PM  
**To:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** Re: Policy Order #46 Testimony  
**Attachments:** Policy Order #46 Testimony.pdf

Hello!!

Attached is my updated testimony from the Policy Order #46 hearing today from 4~6:20p.

Thank you for your time.

On Wed, May 28, 2025 at 2:28 PM Will D <kwd@ishtarcollective.org> wrote:  
Hello!

Attached is a PDF of my live testimony for Policy Order #46.  
I am in position 1 at the hearing today from 4-6pm for live remote testimony // public commentary.

Thank you, I hope you enjoy the day.



I would like to start by introducing myself, and why my voice holds weight in the conversation we're having today: I have been a sex worker since 2018, when I started dancing at adult venues while attending school to obtain degrees in Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, and Sociology. I spent all of my time in school learning about the laws governing sex work vs sex trafficking; and so I bring that knowledge forward today while sharing my lived experience. I speak on behalf of myself, and everyone I've met who has disclosed their stories to me with the hopes we can bring them into the light together.

Sex work is a transient industry, with some folks working while on the move to their bigger goals, only participating in the commercial sex industry out of necessity or survival and plan never again to when they reach financial security and stable housing. There are also folks who have fallen in love with creating adult content and hosting spaces for adults to practice safe and consensual intimacy, who make it their full-time career and pay taxes akin to any brick-and-mortar business. I have fallen all over this spectrum, depending on the year and my goals at the time. I began trading erotic labour in NY, RI, MA, and eventually CT, primarily when I realised I couldn't pay rent on minimum wage in a domestically unstable situation; and again when by circumstance I became responsible for some very important young adults in my life. I do not ever want them to face criminalization for relying on family: me and my choices as an adult to keep us afloat under capitalism. We cannot forget that many *erotic laborers* are also *parents*.

While we're 'thinking of the children', we also have to remember that many young men have suffered violence at the hands of child sexual abuse; and as adults do not know how to find themselves again when trying to date or create families. I will always advocate for the ability to hire a professional to process this trauma in a private and consensual space on their own time, learning how to be intimate again. The majority of my experiences with clients has been respectful and healing, for both of us. I can count on one hand the number of times I have had interactions with folks who I wouldn't consider gentlemen, but rather a malicious character looking to take advantage of someone they view as 'less-than'; and of course that can happen in any industry. When someone flirts with a nurse, they are taking advantage of the space created in the medical field. I wish I felt safe enough to disclose more of my story. I wish I felt safe enough to report the only predator I knowingly have interacted with, who at last check lives here in Massachusetts.

But I won't feel safe enough to participate fully with my community, my neighbours, until the stigma surrounding adult entertaining is quieted with genuine Legal Rights and Protections. The only way to keep us all safe is through the Full Decriminalization of sex work; as Client Criminalization takes away tools for diligent negotiation— which would have prevented me from gathering personal information from a predator who posed as a client, hoping I was too naive to know my own boundaries or how to de-escalate a situation before it got worse.

Client Criminalization is not a compromise but rather a step backwards in keeping our communities safe and connected with social resources (like law enforcement, like healthcare) and continues to isolate families and support networks by criminalizing everyone who knows a sex worker or survivor of exploitation.

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Caty Simon <caty@urbansurvivorsunion.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 28, 2025 6:40 PM  
**To:** City Clerk; Gregory, Shameka  
**Subject:** remainder of my comments on hearing in committee re sex work and sex trafficking

Here is the remainder of my comments I did not have a chance to say because I judged time badly: We as the most marginalized sex workers (53% of my organization is BIPOC, 82% identify as trafficking survivors, and 93% identify as having PTSD) believe we need resources tailored to real trafficking survivors and sex workers, not perfect victims: flexible financial assistance, hotel vouchers, housing, job training, parenting support, etc, not the often harmful resources BSWAC mentioned--coercive and religious, trans-exclusive when so many trans women of color must turn to sex work to survive, often solely based on a cohabitation model which can be very hard for sex workers who suffer violence and use drugs, and shaming survivors. We need resources built for us and an end to carceral solutions. In our experience, the most violence we suffer comes from the state and these misaligned resources.

I also wanted to thank everyone today, whether from "my" side or the "other side" for acknowledging the primacy of resources that are low-threshold and accessible and which fit the recipient, and the importance of social determinants of health.

*Caty Simon*  
*She/her/hers*  
*413-799-1005 (texts only, please)*  
*National Survivors Union Leadership Team Member*  
*Whose Corner Is It Anyway Co-Founder & Development Director*  
*NC Survivors Union Narrative Development Director ([caty@ncsunion.org](mailto:caty@ncsunion.org))*  
*Yale School of Medicine Department of Internal Medicine Research Assistant*  
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## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Will D <kwd@ishtarcollective.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 28, 2025 2:29 PM  
**To:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** Policy Order #46 Testimony  
**Attachments:** Policy Order #46 Testimony.pdf

Hello!

Attached is a PDF of my live testimony for Policy Order #46.

I am in position 1 at the hearing today from 4-6pm for live remote testimony // public commentary.

Thank you, I hope you enjoy the day.



I would like to start by introducing myself, and why my voice holds weight in the conversation we're having today: I have been a sex worker since 2018, when I started dancing at adult venues while attending school to obtain degrees in Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, and Sociology. I spent all of my time in school learning about the laws governing sex work vs sex trafficking; and so I bring that knowledge forward today while sharing my lived experience. I speak on behalf of myself, and everyone I've met who has disclosed their stories to me with the hopes we can bring them into the light together.

Sex work is a transient industry, with some folks working while on the move to their bigger goals, only participating in the commercial sex industry out of necessity or survival and plan never again to when they reach financial security and stable housing. There are also folks who have fallen in love with creating adult content and hosting spaces for adults to practice safe and consensual intimacy, who make it their full-time career and pay taxes akin to any brick-and-mortar business. I have fallen all over this spectrum, depending on the year and my goals at the time. I began trading erotic labour in NY, RI, MA, and eventually CT, when I realised I couldn't pay rent in a domestically unstable situation in 2018. The majority of my experiences with clients has been respectful and healing, for both of us. I can count on one hand the number of times I have had interactions with folks who I wouldn't consider gentlemen, but rather a malicious character looking to take advantage of someone they view as 'less-than'; and of course that can happen in any industry. I wish I felt safe enough to disclose more of my story. I wish I felt safe enough to report the only predator I knowingly have interacted with, who at last check lives here in Massachusetts.

But I won't feel safe enough to participate fully with my community, my neighbours, until the stigma surrounding adult entertaining is quieted with genuine Legal Rights and Protections. The only way to keep us all safe is through the Full Decriminalization of sex work; as Client Criminalization takes away tools for diligent negotiation— which would have prevented me from gathering personal information from a predator who posed as a client, hoping I was too naive to know my own boundaries or how to de-escalate a situation before it got worse.

Client Criminalization is not a compromise but rather a step backwards in keeping our communities safe and connected with social resources (like law enforcement, like healthcare) and continues to isolate families and support networks.

I am open to any questions.

Thank you for your time and energy.

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Boston SWAC <bostonswac@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 27, 2025 6:25 PM  
**To:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** Testimony for Policy Order 46  
**Attachments:** BSWAC Korean massage worker's testimony .pdf

Hello,

In advance of tomorrow's Veterans and Human Services Committee meeting, please find attached testimony which we received from a Korean human trafficking survivor in New York who wished to share her story in light of Cambridge's considerations about the recent brothel case. She is a member of Red Canary Song, an organization of migrant sex workers and massage workers.

One of our members will read the statement on her behalf during public comment.

Thank you,

BSWAC

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**Boston Sex Workers and Allies Collective (BSWAC)**

Website: <https://www.bswac.org/>

Twitter: [@bostonswac](https://twitter.com/bostonswac)



## Korean Worker's Testimony 2021

저는 인신매매 피해자였습니다.

I am a survivor of human trafficking.

미국에 처음 이민 오고 저는 매니저로 일하길 원했지만 스파 주인들은 저에게 강압적으로 성노동을 시켰고 그 과정에서 저는 감금 당하고 수많은 협박을 당했습니다. 절실한 도움이 필요했지만 경찰의 체포는 결코 저를 구제할 수 있는 길이 아니었습니다.

When I first came to the US, I wanted to work as a manager at a massage spa. But the owner coerced me to do sex work at the time, and during that process they locked me up and threatened me many times. I desperately needed help, but police arrests have never been a true rescue to me.

20년동안 마사지 노동을 일하면서 6-7번의 체포를 당했고, 체포 당시 경찰로 부터 엄청난 인권유린과 모욕을 당했습니다. 경찰들은 한 스파에서 일하는 여성들만 체포하는게 아니라 하루종일 여러 스파들을 돌면서 수 많은 여성들을 한꺼번에 체포하기 때문에, 저는 경찰차에서 화장실도 못가고 수갑 찬 채로 8시간 이상 대기해야 했습니다. 유치장 안에서도 경찰로 부터 수 많은 모욕을 당하고, 더러운 이불과 차가운 시멘트 바닥에서 밤을 지새워야 했습니다.

Having worked at a massage parlor for almost 2 decades, I have been arrested 6 to 7 times. Every moment of arrest was harrowing and traumatizing. My rights were infringed, and I felt insulted. When my workplace was raided, the NYPD arrested several more massage workers from other spas throughout the day. I was handcuffed and trapped in a police car for 8 hours, without access to bathroom.

경찰들은 모든 마사지, 성노동 여성들을 인신매매 희생자들로 바라보고, 구제 및 보호를 하겠다고 선전하지만 제가 경찰들로 부터 겪은 비참한 일들을 돌아켜보면, 경찰의 치안과 체포는 결코 여성들을 보호해주는 길이 아닙니다. 중국인 마사지 노동자 송양의 죽음을 생각해 보세요. 왜 송양이 도움을 주겠다는 경찰을 피하고, 그 과정에서 아파트 난간에서 떨어져 죽음을 당해야 했을까요? 과연 누구를 위한 단속입니까?

Police advertise that they see all massage workers and sex workers as human trafficking victims; and that they will save us; and protect us. But looking back all the traumatizing incidents with police, I know for a fact that policing and arrest is not a way to protect women. Think about the death of Yang Song, a young Chinese massage worker in 2018. Tell me why she had to fall from the 4th floor balcony just to avoid the police, if police was there to help her. For whom is the police raiding us, intimidating us, and arresting us?

그리고 저는 인신매매를 겪어야 했지만, 모든 마사지, 성노동자들이 인신매매 피해자는 아닙니다. 그들은 마사지 일을 하나의 정당한 노동으로 생각하며, 가족을 돌보기 위해 그리고 생계를 위해 이 직업을 택했습니다. 그리고 그들은 몸과 마음이 아픈 손님들에게 마사지와 성노동으로 위로와 치유를 전합니다. 마사지, 성노동자들은 인신매매 피해자가 아니라 몸과 마음으로 노동을 하는 치유사들입니다.

Also, even though I survived human trafficking, that doesn't mean that all Asian women working in massage parlors have the same experiences. Many massage workers and sex workers, especially lately, consider their work as legitimate work; a job we choose to make a living and support our families. We heal our clients who are physically or mentally struggling. Sex workers and massage workers are not (all) victims. We are mainly healers providing services using our bodies, just like any other jobs.

하지만 마사지와 성노동을 사회악, 위협으로 바라보는 그릇된 인식으로 인해, 마사지, 성노동자들은 늘 본인의 직업이 다른 사람들에게 드러날까봐 감추고, 거짓말하고. 숨기며 살아갑니다. 이러한 사회적 인식은 우리 마사지/성노동자들이 세상 밖으로 나오는 용기를 갖는 것을 더욱 어렵게 하며 불안, 공포, 우울감에서 쉽게 벗어나지 못하게 합니다.

But because of the false stereotype that views us as a social problem and a threat, I see many many massage and sex workers who have to hide in isolation and lie to their loved ones, fearing somebody would find out about their job. The social stigma makes it harder for us to seek help when we need it and restore ourselves from hardships, leading to chronic fear, anxiety, and depression.

미국정부가 마사지/성노동자들을 하나의 인격체로 바라본다면, 인신매매 단속과 치안강화를 위해 쓰여지는 예산들은 경찰력 강화가 아니라 마사지/성 노동자들의 삶을 위해 쓰여져야 합니다. 우리는 긴 세월동안 앓아온 우울증을 극복하기 위해 성노동자들을 존중할 줄 아는 정신과 치료가 필요하며, 정당하게 산부인과에서 주기적으로 진료받는 프로그램도 필요합니다. 또, 우리가 즐겁게 이야기하고 서로 보듬어 줄 수 있는 문화적 공간도 필요합니다. 레드카나리 송처럼 마사지/성노동자들에게 진심으로 다가가고 사랑을 전달하는 커뮤니티들이 더욱 활성화 되어야 합니다. 경찰예산을 우리 마사지/성 노동자들을 위한 커뮤니티 사업을 위해 써주세요. 그것만이 외롭고 지친 마사지/성노동자들을 살려낼 수 있는 길입니다. 우리의 인권과 노동권을 보호해 주세요.

우리도 사람입니다. 우리는 바이러스가 아닙니다.

If the United States government truly sees Asian migrant massage workers and sex workers as equal human beings, the money that goes to enforcing the police force and arresting us should instead go to nurturing our lives. Many of us need mental health services by professionals who respect sex workers; and regular OB/GYN check-ups that's accessible to everyone who's undocumented or don't have insurance. Also, we need a space for our culture, where we can be honest, happy, and caring for each other. We need more communities like Red Canary Song, where neighbors approach us with love and sincerity. Please consider moving the funds for policing / to / community projects for us. That is the only way you could save sex and massage workers who are lonely and fed up being policed. Protect our rights as fundamentally humans and workers.

We are humans, not a virus.감사합니다