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Alaskan Sex Trafficking Survivors And Sex Workers Call Foul On HB 66

House Bill 66 is set to pass tomorrow on the Senate Floor. It will add a new statute that anyone with a Sex Trafficking in the first degree or second degree conviction (11.66.110 & 11.66.120), would have to register on the sex offender registry. Sex trafficking in the second degree is defined as sex workers or sex trafficking survivors sharing clients, working together, or traveling.

“When the public thinks of the sex offender registry, we think of someone who’s sexually assaulted another,” said Maxine Doogan of Community United for Safety and Protection, Alaska’s group of current and former sex workers, sex trafficking victims and our allies. “It doesn’t make any sense to include those convicted of second degree sex trafficking as that would not have involved actually putting your hands on anyone or harming anyone.”

HB66 sat dormant for a year before it was heavily amended in the Senate Judiciary a little over week ago without public comment into the behemoth it is now. The public’s voice was heard on the new omnibus bill for the first time when it went before the Senate Finance Committee on Friday. Many testifiers expressed concerns for other parts of the new bill from the expansion of the hearsay in a grand jury proceeding to the incarceration and involuntary commitment of mentally ill and intellectually disabled people without due process.

“This bill as written would cause harm to the sex trafficking survivors and sex workers that will get arrested for sex trafficking in the second degree. A conviction of sex trafficking already creates barriers for employment, housing, and increased stigma,” said Amber Nickerson, a member of Community United for Safety and Protection, who herself was convicted of sex trafficking in the second degree in 2015 under the travel section. “Essentially, sex workers working together would be charged under this new provision which doesn’t expand public safety.”

“Unfortunately, sex trafficking survivors are even more likely to be charged under this statute

than sex workers, because they often work together and traffickers know they can limit their criminal liability by making their victims responsible for travel and other arrangements,” said Terra Burns, a member of the Community United for Safety and Protection, who to date has done the only academic research [on people in Alaska’s sex trades](#), which was cited in a John Oliver show that featured Alaska’s ridiculous sex trafficking law (starting at [12:30 here](#)).

These unintended consequences in HB 66 must be addressed by removing sex trafficking in the second degree, 11.66.120 from section 30 of HB 66 before it is passed into law. The general public needs to be made aware what far reaching consequences this bill has for Alaska’s future.

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