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Alaskan Sex Workers Wonder If Anchorage's Newly Appointed Police Chief Follow Safety Provision

Anchorage Alaska - Newly elected Anchorage City Mayor, Suzanne LaFrance, is appointing Sean Case as Anchorage Police Chief in her new administration. He will be seated July 1 but Alaskan sex workers wonder if he and his department will follow the immunity provision that allows sex workers to report if they're victims or witnesses to serious crime without the threat of being arrested for prostitution.

"We're concerned about the newly appointed police chief's position on making sure he and his department knows that its a part of Alaska law that no one is to be arrested or feel threatened with a prostitution arrests when reporting a serious crime," said Tara Burns of Community United for Safety and Protection, Alaska's group of current and former sex workers, sex trafficking survivors and allies. "We're concerned because he opposed the immunity ordinance and another proposed law that would have made it a sexual assault for police have to sexual contact or penetration with us in prostitution sting operations. He went so far as to travel to Juneau to oppose it and made his position clear in a public statement to the Anchorage Daily News that he thinks it's okay to have sexual contact with us as a means to arrest us and it's not okay. Police should never trick people into unwanted sex.."

HB112 was a bill introduced by then Alaska House Representative Matt Claman in 2017 that would have made sexual penetration and contact by a police officer in the course of a prostitution sting operation a third and fourth degree sexual assault, but the bill only got one hearing the because of the actions like the newly appointed [Anchorage Police chief, who told lawmakers](#) that cops need to have sexual contact with those they are investigating for prostitution, especially sex trafficking victims. Shortly after lobbying against HB112, APD (unsuccessfully) opposed an Anchorage ordinance to create immunity from prostitution charges when reporting heinous crimes that same year.

"Its especially concerning in light of the recent conviction of serial murder Brian Stevens

Smith," said Amber Batts, a member of Community United for Safety and Protection, "There are still unsolved crimes against members of our community and that immunity clause at the state and municipal level plays an important element in people coming forward. I hope the new police chief doesn't screw that up for us. We need to be expanding safety for workers and I hope that APD will uphold the law under this provision for the public's safety. I mean, does the new mayor even know what her appointed police chief has said in the past about us not being deserving of equal protection under the law?"

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