

What Future Do We Want for Michigan?

The question whether to decriminalize the sex trade in Michigan has put how to address prostitution front and center. As the public considers this important issue, it's critical we understand the scope and scale of the changes proposed. Full decriminalization would dramatically alter our communities while putting many more at risk of sex trafficking. This is not the Michigan we want. Learn why the Equality Model works.

Objectives for changes to the MI laws

Equality Model

- End the arrests and incarceration of people in prostitution while continuing to prosecute pimps, brothel and illicit massage parlor owners and managers, sex tourism operators, and sex buyers

Full Decriminalization Model

- Decriminalize the sex trade, including prostitution, patronizing prostitution (sex buying), promoting prostitution (pimping), and sex tourism operations

BOTH AGREE THAT PEOPLE BOUGHT AND SOLD IN THE SEX TRADE MUST NOT BE PROSECUTED AND INCARCERATED

Arrests

- Only arrests of those who buy and sell others for sexual acts: pimps, brothel owners and managers, escort services owners, sex buyers, and sex tourism operators

- No arrests of pimps, brothel owners and managers, escort services owners, sex buyers, and sex tourism operators

BOTH AGREE THAT VICTIMS OF PROSTITUTION AND SEX TRAFFICKING MUST BE ABLE TO VACATE PROSTITUTION-RELATED CONVICTIONS

Preferred Terms

- Only arrests of those who buy and sell others for sexual acts: pimps, brothel owners and managers, escort services owners, sex buyers, and sex tourism operators

- No arrests of pimps, brothel owners and managers, escort services owners, sex buyers, and sex tourism operators

Societal Objectives

Equality Model

- Shift stigma from prostituted people to those who exploit them
- Reduce demand, the economic engine of the global multi-billion dollar sex trade
- Prevent exploiters from preying on women, transwomen, and youth marginalized by poverty, racism, gender inequality, and homophobia
- Recognize that prostituted people are subjected to sexual, physical, and psychological violence and suffer severe trauma
- Change culture from one that accepts the right to purchase people for sex to one that promotes equality
- Reduce sex trafficking
- Avoid turning MI into a global sex tourism destination

Full Decriminalization Model

- Reconceptualize and redefine prostitution as labor
- Legalize/decriminalize the sextrade
- Normalize prostitution and related activities
- Destigmatize the sextrade
- Promote prostitution as legitimate income-generating activity, “a job like any other”
- Facilitate the ability of individuals and networks profiting from prostitution to do business in Michigan unimpeded
- Protect sex buyers as sources of livelihood, rename commercial sex establishment owners/managers (brothels, escort services, etc.) as “business entrepreneurs,” and international sex traffickers as “migrant facilitators”

Results

Equality Model

Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Canada, Northern Ireland, France, Republic of Ireland, Israel

- Prostitution and trafficking decreased significantly; sex traffickers avoid these “unprofitable” markets
- No increase in violence against prostituted people
- No evidence that prostitution has been pushed “underground”
- Cultural transformation in attitudes: purchasing people for sex is no longer socially acceptable and is deemed a barrier to gender equality
- Dedicated services and exit strategies

Full Decriminalization Model

Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand

- Commercial sex establishments multiply
- Demand for prostitution escalates
- Growing numbers of highly marginalized people in prostitution (immigrants, women and girls of color, transwomen and girls)
- The physical/mental health of prostituted people remains precarious
- Higher incidence of human trafficking
- State economy benefits from sex trade
- No dedicated services or exit strategies

SOURCES:

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