

2020 -- S 2481

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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SENATE RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY OPTIMIZING HEALTH  
AND SAFETY LAWS AFFECTING MARGINALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Introduced By: Senators Euer, and Valverde

Date Introduced: February 13, 2020

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

1           WHEREAS, There has been significant research on the safety and health impact of laws  
2 specifically related to violence, exploitation, stigma, human trafficking, and sexual health, but  
3 more needs to be done analyzing the data; and

4           WHEREAS, These laws disproportionately impact women, transgender individuals, and  
5 people of color; and

6           WHEREAS, Rhode Island-based advocates in conjunction with university-based  
7 academics have found a documented increase in exploitation and violence against people in the  
8 sex industry in Rhode Island since the passage of federal legislation FOSTA/SESTA; and

9           WHEREAS, A newly published meta-analysis of 134 studies across many nations  
10 published over a 28 year period showed increased violence and incidence of sexually transmitted  
11 infections (STIs) in jurisdictions with repressive police practices; and

12           WHEREAS, A 2017 Rhode Island study conducted by Baylor University's Scott  
13 Cunningham and Manisha Shah of the University of California Los Angeles, published in the  
14 Review of Economic Studies found that during 2003 through 2009, while indoor prostitution was  
15 still decriminalized in Rhode Island, the number of rapes diminished by 31 percent and the  
16 statewide incidence of gonorrhea among women diminished by 39 percent; and

17           RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created  
18 consisting of thirteen (13) members: two (2) of whom shall be members of the Senate, to be  
19 appointed by the Senate President; one of whom shall be a from COYOTE-RI, to be selected by

1 the Chairperson; one of whom shall be from Amnesty International, to be selected by the  
2 Chairperson; two (2) of whom shall be representatives of organizations serving populations  
3 disproportionately impacted by the criminalization of commercial sex, with priority given to  
4 organizations focused on improving public health, supporting survivors of violence and sexual  
5 assault, and civil rights organizations, to be selected by the Chairperson; one of whom shall be the  
6 Director of the Department of Health, or designee; one of whom shall be the Rhode Island Public  
7 Defender, or designee; one of whom shall be the Rhode Island Attorney General, or designee; one  
8 of whom shall be the Director of the Brown University Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice,  
9 or designee; two (2) of whom shall be individuals that have engaged in commercial sex, to be  
10 appointed by the Chairperson; and one of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island Police  
11 Chief's Association, or designee.

12 In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a permanent advisory  
13 commission, a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly  
14 resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu  
15 of a legislator, provided that the majority leader or the minority leader of the political party which  
16 is entitled to the appointment consents to the appointment of the member of the general public.

17 The purpose of said commission shall be to make a comprehensive study and provide  
18 recommendations on the health and safety impact of revising laws related to commercial sexual  
19 activity, and identifying the methods of human trafficking and exploitation to develop strategies  
20 to reduce these activities.

21 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at  
22 the call of the Senate President and organize and shall select a chairperson from among the  
23 legislators.

24 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

25 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

26 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
27 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
28 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

29 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide  
30 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

31 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and results to the  
32 Senate on or before February 1, 2021, and said commission shall expire on May 1, 2021.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
SENATE RESOLUTION  
CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY OPTIMIZING HEALTH  
AND SAFETY LAWS AFFECTING MARGINALIZED INDIVIDUALS

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- 1           This resolution would create a thirteen (13) member special legislative commission
- 2 whose purpose it would be to study the health and safety impact of optimizing health and safety
- 3 laws affecting marginalized individuals, and who would report back to the Senate on or before
- 4 February 1, 2021, and said commission would expire on May 1, 2021.

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