



*Affirming Sexual Freedom as a Fundamental Human Right*

[woodhullfoundation.org](http://woodhullfoundation.org)

May 23, 2024

172 State Street,  
Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Re: Support Human Rights by Passing S1966 (Sepulveda) / A7471 (Kelles)

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

I am writing to strongly urge you to support S1966 (Sepulveda) / A7471 (Kelles), "An act to amend the penal law, in relation to individuals engaged in prostitution who are victims of or witnesses to a crime" in the interest of public safety and the health and wellbeing of all New Yorkers. This legislation is critical to protect victims of crime and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.

S1966/A7471 ensures that victims and witnesses of crime can safely report their experience to law enforcement and seek healthcare without the fear of being prosecuted for prostitution. People involved in commercial sexual activity (whether by choice or by force, fraud, or coercion) often are victims of violent crime and exploitation but frequently don't report crimes perpetrated against them due to fear of arrest. When those abusers are not discovered by law enforcement, they are able to continue their acts of violence and exploitation with impunity.

Tragically, the most infamous modern case of violence targeting sex workers happened here in New York. A suspect was finally arrested in the "Long Island Serial Killer" case last year after an investigation that lasted over a decade. Rex Heuermann was known to sex workers as a violent and dangerous man, but because they could not report him to law enforcement without the risk of being criminalized themselves, he went uncaught, likely committing more violent acts for year after unnecessary year.

You have an opportunity now to enact a policy that could prevent something similar from happening here in the future. This bill not only protects victims of trafficking and sex workers who experience or witness violence, but it also provides law enforcement with a critical tool in investigating some of the most heinous crimes, from assault to human trafficking to murder. Nine other states have already enacted similar laws, and legislators are advancing immunity bills in other states at this moment. Please do not let New York fall behind in creating this critical protection for its residents.

Please take the next step in promoting public safety and the well-being of crime victims and support S1966/A7471 by bringing this bill to a vote. New Yorkers should not have to wait any longer to be able to safely report crime.

Best,  
Mandy Salley,  
for Woodhull Freedom Foundation