

2020 -- H 7842

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

Introduced By: Representatives Williams, Newberry, Ajello, Vella-Wilkinson, and  
Knight

Date Introduced: February 26, 2020

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

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, There has been a documented increase in exploitation and violence against  
7 people in the sex industry in Rhode Island since the passage of federal legislation  
8 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 STIs in jurisdictions  
11 with repressive police practices; and

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

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 House, to be  
19 appointed by the Speaker of the House; one of whom shall be from the organization COYOTE-

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

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

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

23 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at  
24 the call of the Speaker of the House and organize and shall select a chairperson from among the  
25 legislators.

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

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

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

31 The Speaker of the House is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters  
32 for said commission; and be it further

- 1 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and results to the House of
- 2 Representatives on or before February 7, 2021, and said commission shall expire on May 7, 2021.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
HOUSE 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 House of  
4 Representatives on or before February 7, 2021, and said commission would expire on May 7,  
5 2021.

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