



**HB 431**  
**Opponent Testimony**  
**Blyth Barnow**  
**Harm Reduction Faith Manager**  
**Faith In Public Life**  
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Chairman Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer opponent testimony for HB 431.

My name is Blyth Barnow, I serve as the Harm Reduction Faith Manger for Faith in Public Life in Ohio. Faith in Public Life is a local, and national, network of clergy who are united in the prophetic pursuit of the common good.

As people of faith we know that shame and increased criminalization does not make our communities safer. Instead it puts those most marginalized at higher risk by pushing them farther into isolation and fear. It is for this reason that we offer opponent testimony for HB 431 and ask you not to pass this deadly legislation.

Publicly shaming people who pay for sex does nothing to protect sex workers. Especially those who do street based sex work. In fact when clients are threatend, people who do sex work put at higher risk. Often being forced, by circumstance or coercion, to work more frequently and provide riskier services for less pay.

Policies such as these are often cloaked in well meaning concern, which often simply amounts to a distorted version of christian morality that costs women and workers their safety.

To paraphrase Sister Joan Chittister, to support legislation like this is to deny what it means to be a follower of the Jesus who came that the outcasts of this world may have life - and have it more abundantly.

It is the world that makes outcasts, not God. And as people of faith we know that shame is death dealing and counter to the life giving values of the Gospel.

HB 431 may be rooted in such good intentions but it does not reflect the on the ground reality of people engaging in sex work. The sacred lives of those engaged in sex work cannot be boiled down to oversimplified metaphors about supply and demand. The sex trade and the reasons people engage it are far more complicated than that.

If the true measure of success for legislation such as this is the increased safety and well being of people in the sex trade, then let the funds that would be used on this dangerous and ineffective database to instead be directed towards free childcare and a living wage for women with little economic opportunity under our current system. We do not support people engaged in sex work by making their job more dangerous, we support them by increasing their access to safety, support, and choice.

The bottom line is that this database would endanger women, and disproportionately impact vulnerable workers who are migrants, transgender, and/or people of color.

If you care about violence against women, immigrant justice, workers rights, or economic sustainability then please do not pass HB 431.

Thank you again for this opportunity to offer testimony against HB 431. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Blyth Barnow  
Ohio Harm Reduction Faith Manager  
Faith In Public Life  
bbarnow@faithinpubliclife.org