



HB 431

Opponent Testimony

Kasey Badgley

Organizer

River Valley Organizing Project / UnHarming Ohio

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Chairman Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition to House Bill 431.

My name is Kasey Badgley. I am an organizer with River Valley Organizing Project, primarily based in Columbiana, Jefferson, and Mahoning counties. River Valley Organizing Project includes a drug war survivors union called UnHarming Ohio, which is comprised of leaders committed to restorative and transformative solutions for public health and justice that DEFY the isolation of incarceration, the impacts of racialized drug policies, and violent policing; empowering and strengthening the health and morale for all.

Through my work with River Valley Organizing Project and with UnHarming Ohio I am regularly in contact with members of the most vulnerable populations in society. I regularly work very intimately with sex workers, and have a clear understanding of the lifestyle and nature of their transactions. While potentially well-intentioned, keeping a database of people who pay for sex work services doesn't actually do anything to liberate or protect street-based sex workers. On the contrary, it drives the work more underground and into more compromised and dangerous situations. If there is a possibility that customers of sex workers are kept in a database, there is a possibility that those folks are being surveilled. Which will force vulnerable sex workers to take their work more underground.

Because the work would be pushed into more dangerous and compromised situations, it could force the workers into a sect of sex work that they would not previously have engaged in because they need to make up for lost income. This bill is short-sighted and clearly not in service of those who are claimed to be helped by this legislation.

House Bill 431 is a huge misstep, and if passed will harm sex workers immensely. Thank you again for allowing me to testify and I'm happy to take any questions the committee may have.