

2021 -- H 5489

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

Introduced By: Representatives Williams, Messier, Ajello, Slater, Felix, and Alzate

Date Introduced: February 10, 2021

Referred To: House Health & Human Services

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 of the House; one of whom shall be the
9 Rhode Island Attorney General, or designee; one of whom shall be from the Brown University
10 Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; two (2)
11 of whom shall be individuals that have engaged in commercial sex, to be appointed by the
12 commission Chairperson; and one of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island Police
13 Chief's 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, 2022, and said commission shall expire on May 7, 2022.

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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

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, 2022, and said commission would expire on May 7,
5 2022.

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