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Sex Workers Outraged At Backpage Charges

Sex Workers Condemn Charges Against Backpage As Political Stunt For Kamala Harris Senate Run; Claim That Forcing Sex Workers Back Onto The Streets Makes Them Far Less Safe

San Francisco, CA - A sex work activist group, the Erotic Service Providers Legal Education Research Project (ESPLERP), today joined sex worker rights groups and civil rights organisations in condemning yesterday's raid on Backpage's Dallas offices and the arrest of their CEO and controlling shareholders.

"This is just the latest attempt to shut down online sex work advertising," said Maxine Doogan, President of ESPLERP. "It will not stop sex work. All it will do is force sex workers back onto the streets, where they are far less safe and vulnerable to violence and extortion. In effect, Kamala Harris is deliberately making the lives of sex workers more dangerous to boost her Senate hopes. Disgusting."

"This is a political stunt," said Claire Alwyne of ESPLERP. "If Kamala Harris really cared about protecting women, she would investigate Bay Area police departments, which have a long history of systematically exploiting and extorting sex workers. The ongoing scandal of the Oakland underage sex worker is only the tip of the iceberg. But she needs the endorsements of those police departments for her Senate run."

Interestingly, Kamala Harris is a named defendant (in her official capacity) in ESPLERP's ground breaking lawsuit, ESPLERP v Gascon, which challenges California's anti-prostitution law 647(b) on the grounds that it is unconstitutional. That case is now being appealed to the Ninth Circuit, where a long list of civil rights and LGBT organisations are filing amicus (friend of the court) briefs calling on the court to reverse the lower district court ruling.

ESPLERP's court case is mostly funded by individuals making small contributions, but our opponents (the State of California and various District Attorneys) have very deep pockets - essentially using our taxpayer dollars to deny us our rights. Contributions to support the court case can be submitted through our crowd fundraiser - www.litigatetoemancipate.com.

The Erotic Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) is a diverse community-based coalition advancing sexual privacy rights through litigation, education, and research.

esplerp.org, decriminalizessexwork.com

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