

**IFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 30, 2019**

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## **California Governor Signs Immunity From Prostitution Arrest Bill SB233**

*Sex Workers Applaud Governor's Signature Of SB233 Which Protects Individuals Reporting Serious Crime And Removes Condoms As Probable Cause For Prostitution Arrests*

SAN FRANCISCO — The Erotic Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) applauds California Governor Gavin Newsom for signing Senate Bill 233 into law.

Originally sponsored by Senator Scott Wiener, Assembly Members Bill Quirk and Laura Friedman, SB233 picked up two more sponsors along the way: Assembly Members Buffy Wicks and Sydney Kamlager-Dove. This first of its kind legislation protects anyone reporting a serious crime (such as sexual assault, trafficking, robbery, domestic violence, or other violent crime) without being charged with a misdemeanor prostitution charge under California Penal Code 647. It also removes condoms as probable cause for prostitution arrests.

"I was violently assaulted by a predator who targeted prostitutes in 2012," said Reada Wong. "But when the police found out that I was a prostitute, they lost interest, demeaned me, and threatened to charge me. And then, much later, when the guy was finally charged, he plead guilty. If the police and district attorney had done their jobs when I first reported the assault, the predator wouldn't have still been out there to assault other women."

"I was raped by a client in 2001," said Veronica Monet. "Three weeks later, he stabbed a young woman in the face when she resisted. We were sharing information online so we knew he was a dangerous serial rapist. But when I reported him to the Oakland Police Department they wanted to arrest me for getting raped, because I admitted that I was a prostitute. Then, after three years of pressure on then Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown, I was finally allowed to report this rape without threat of being arrested myself. However, the police still made no attempt to contact this violent predator's other victims, and he was neither questioned or apprehended. As a result, he is still out there to this day, and remains a serious threat to the safety of all women."

SB 233 will make it easier for people like Reada Wong and Veronica Monet to report violence - and encourages the police to take assaults against sex workers seriously.

"This is important legislation," said Maxine Doogan of ESPLERP. "We are very pleased to see Governor Newsom's signature on a law which enables prostitutes to report rape and assault without fear of being arrested. And now we can do our part in helping the state get to zero HIV transmissions, a goal long held by the California Department of Public Health, without the fear of our carrying condoms being used as evidence for prostitution arrests".

SB 233 is based on policy supported by the San Francisco Police Department and District Attorney. It's especially relevant after the passing of Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA), in April of 2018 which has disastrously affected the safety of sex workers. So we applaud our Governor for taking our call for help seriously. Now police can prioritize public health and public safety.

*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. Contributions to support the court case can be submitted through our crowd fundraiser - [www.litigatetoemancipate.com](http://www.litigatetoemancipate.com).*

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