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## **Sex Workers Commend US Representatives Khanna and Lee for Introducing Federal Study On Effects of Decried ‘Sex Trafficking’ Bill**

*Historic bill requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to examine the impacts of SESTA/FOSTA on the health and safety of sex workers in the United States*

San Francisco California — The Erotic Service Providers Legal Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) today commended US Representatives Ro Khanna and Barbara Lee for introducing the SAFE SEX Workers Study Act, HR 5448 (<https://preview.tinyurl.com/wcde5wa>), to “direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study to assess the unintended impacts on the health and safety of people engaged in transactional sex, in connection with the enactment of the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-164) and the loss of interactive computer services that host information related to sexual exchange...”. Full text of the legislation can be found [here](#).

Introduced on December 17th, which is the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers (<https://preview.tinyurl.com/nz7gudu>), the bill requires that Health and Human Services (HHS) study how losing access to online advertising and networking platforms has impacted the health and safety of people in the commercial sex trade.

Despite the loudly stated concerns of people in the commercial sex community, Congress passed SESTA/FOSTA by a large margin in 2018. Exactly as predicted, there were immediate negative impacts where many adult websites disappeared almost overnight. As a result, without safe places to advertise and negotiate with clients, many sex workers quickly found themselves without work - or the means to pay for basic living expenses. And many then had no choice but to return to street based sex work, where workers are subject to harassment and violence from clients, predators and law enforcement.

There is absolutely no evidence that SESTA/FOSTA has made it easier to catch sex traffickers. But in contrast, there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence from cities across the country showing that violence against sex workers has risen risen dramatically. Representatives Khanna and Lee are taking the common-sense position that HHS should study the impacts of SESTA-FOSTA on the most vulnerable members of society, so that Congress can make informed policy decisions.

“This bad law has caused our community substantial harm - and that harm should be documented as a first step to understanding how to remediate it,” said Maxine Doogan of ESPLERP. “This study provides an important opportunity to have our voices heard. And hopefully the information we contribute to this

study will let Congress know that our lives are valuable - and that our voices need to be taken into account in the formulation of future laws and policies.”

*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 our advocacy can be made at [www.litigatetoemancipate.com](http://www.litigatetoemancipate.com).*

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