



Living in Freedom Together
Empowering and Elevating Survivors

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To the Massachusetts Judiciary Committee,

My name is Nicole Bell and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Living In Freedom Together-LIFT Inc and I am writing to express my support for Section 37 of S.2820 the Reform, Shift, and Build Act. At LIFT we support victims of commercial sexual exploitation a vulnerable population who have been over policed, criminalized, and incarcerated. Due to the over criminalization of the women we work with we have expanded our work to support survivors of prostitution within the courts and criminal justice system.

Many of the women we work with at the jail are set up for failure when released from the correctional facilities. Though the facility they are incarcerated in provide healthcare and access to programming they are not being provided with access to education or job training due to their brief sentences and are essentially released in a worse situation than when they were brought into jail. Most women in prostitution entered the sex trade between twelve and fourteen years old, most have not graduated high school, and the majority have little to no job training or skills. Not only are we incarcerating them for their own victimization but when we do so we are placing an additional hurdle of having a criminal record in front of them to attain employment. Even if employment is attained it is typically a very low paying job which they cannot support themselves with and they are forced back into the sex trade and ultimately end up relapsing with substances and end back in the correctional system.

The Reform, Shift, and Build Act will empower survivors and provide them with access to education and job training as opposed to them facing extreme violence within the sex trade and the trauma of incarceration. The prison budget continues to increase all the while the prison population is decreasing and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation are denied access to jobs and education simply because they do not exist in our communities. It is time to invest in our communities and empower individuals whom have experience incarceration to join workforce and show them they are deserving and capable of viable employment opportunities.

In addition to being the Chief Executive Officer of LIFT I am also a person whom was arrested over 30 times, incarcerated more times than I can remember, and a survivor of prostitution myself. I can tell you that over the ten years I was in and out of state, and county jails I was never afforded the opportunity to get an education or job training. I often wonder if I had access to these resources in my community if I could have escaped the violence of prostitution much sooner, but I will never know that because I didn't. I implore you to support Section 37 of S.2820 and provide access to opportunity for the survivors we support and women like myself so we can be free of the violence of the sex trade and a part of the workforce and our community.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nicole Bell
Founder and Chief Executive Officer