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**ADVOCATES PRAISE NEW EFFORT TO DECRIMINALIZE SEX WORKERS AND
COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

NEW YORK—Advocates today praised Mayor de Blasio's new proposal to support sex workers and victims of human trafficking. This reform is part of the City's larger New York City Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative draft plan. Through this initiative, the City will develop new strategies to combat trafficking while working to eliminate arrests for selling sex.

“It’s time to decriminalize sex workers and focus our enforcement on those who exploit and profit off a broken system,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “We are calling on the State to end criminal penalties for sex workers and help us reach those in need without requiring involvement with the criminal justice system.”

"The communities hit hardest by the continued criminalization of sex work and human trafficking are overwhelmingly LGBTQ, they are people of color, and they are undocumented immigrants," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. "Sex work is a means of survival for many in these marginalized groups. Instead of handcuffs they need services, housing and support, and these reforms will enable them to come forward without fear."

Under this proposed reform, the City will create a State legislative frameworks for decriminalizing sex work and supporting people who are victimized by trafficking. To expand services for sex workers, the City will explore pre-arrest program models to offer community-centered services to sex workers without conducting arrest as a condition of receipt, as opposed to post-arrest diversion which relies on offering services as a condition of release from arrest or incarceration.

The City will also explore and refine proposals related to sex work programs and services, especially sex worker led health, employment, and safety programs. Supportive community-based services for sex workers will be expanded, including creating new partnerships outside of law enforcement by formalizing the Task Force on Health and Safety Needs of Sex workers led by the NYC Unity Project and Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence (ENDGBV).

The NYPD will also review policies and procedures for identifying and investigating human trafficking to develop alternative methods that focus on arresting traffickers without further criminalizing and harming those directly involved in the sex trade and to address the racialized enforcement of sex work. While arrests are driven by complaints, the vast majority of individuals arrested for prostitution-related charges continue to be Black and Hispanic. They will collaborate

with other agencies to maximize their ability to arrest and prosecute traffickers and violent offenders without collateral trauma to people engaged in consensual sex work or who are victims of exploitation.

These efforts will build on progress made in this Administration to drastically reduce the arrests of sex workers. The NYPD, ENDGBV, the Unity Project, and other experts will support community-led officer training on identifying people who are being trafficked or exploited as well as work directly with those involved in the sex trades to develop solutions that mitigate the impact of law enforcement actions and to ensure those who want services have full and fair information and access to them.

“People in the sex trades have long been marginalized, stigmatized, and criminalized in ways that are unhelpful at best and violent at worst,” said **Ashe McGovern, Executive Director of the NYC Unity Project**. “We are eager for the opportunity to work across the Administration and citywide with our community partners to support a Task Force that centers and prioritizes the lived experiences of sex workers and begins with the core and fundamental presumption that all people in the sex trades deserve respect, autonomy, and dignity—at work, in their daily lives, and when seeking out city services and support.”

“All too often sex workers are forced into the trade by violent and dangerous traffickers. The Fortune Society applauds the de Blasio administration and the NYPD for focusing on strategies that combat trafficking and hold traffickers accountable while providing critical support and protections to their vulnerable victims,” said **JoAnne Page, President and CEO of the Fortune Society**.

“Many people have to understand that there is an issue and criminalizing sex workers is not the way to go,” said **Ethel Titus of Caribbean American Pride**. “These steps we are taking are crucial towards ensuring that those who need it are protected.”

“Increased support for survivors of human trafficking is necessary. Expanding/creating actions that focus on traffickers without punishing those involved in the trade are imperative,” said **Joyce McMillan, Community Organizer and Founder of JMacForFamilies**. “I believe there are more pressing issues that could use the due process and legal power of our Justice System,” said Brendez Wineglass, Founder of Power Social Events. “I completely disagree with the exploitation of anyone’s talents or expertise to the gain of another. Those who have been victims of any suggested exploitation deserve consistent and thorough support to heal.”

“The NYPD Reform and Reinvention Collaborative will do what is long overdue, create space to support and uplift former and current sex workers and survivors of human trafficking. While this initiative is one step forward, it must include the voice of those directly impacted. At Destination Tomorrow, our Sex Worker Immediate Temporary Comprehensive Housing (SWITCH) looks to develop strategies to address the need for safe, affordable housing that is community centered. We look forward to working with the Mayor to build on this effort,” said **Sean Coleman, Founder and Executive Director of Destination Tomorrow**.

"We applaud the Mayor - and especially the Black, brown and trans activists who have been working tirelessly for years to decriminalize sex work - for announcing this proposal. The best way to support the health and wellness of sex workers is by protecting them from harassment and unjust incarceration," said **Zil Goldstein, FNP, Associate Director of Medicine for Transgender/Non-Binary Health, Callen-Lorde Community Health Center.**

"Sex workers are multi-faceted people; they are healers, educators and advocates who work in an industry heavily exploited due to stigma and morality policing. Decriminalization will decrease human trafficking and sex workers can be hired as experts to help identify individuals most vulnerable to human trafficking. At the Sex Workers Project we assist both survivors of human trafficking and sex workers, recognizing that the intersections of race, sexuality, and migrant status creates triple challenges while surviving as an adult consensual sex worker in this society," said **Zola Z. Bruce from the Sex Workers Project of the Urban Justice Center.**

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