Submissions to
Chairperson of the Multi Party Women’s Caucus – Parliamentary Committee
On the
South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) Report 107 on Adult Prostitution
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Background
My name is Norman Shamas. I am a human rights activist and information security and privacy professional from the US who works around sexual freedom and gender identity, including global sex worker communities.

Respond
I support full decriminalization of sex work in South Africa.

Sex work is a socio-economic issue that is linked to social inequality. Criminalization of sex workers by and large affects the most marginalized communities and does little to curb the market for sex workers. Attempts at partial decriminalization (criminalizing the buyer) has not effectively reduced or prevented the harassment and assault of sex workers, in some cases it has even lead to an increase of harassment and arrests of sex workers.

With any degree of criminalization, sex workers are still subject to censorship and illegality, putting them at greater risk. Online platforms in the US continue to remove online spaces sex workers can use, leading them to use less regulated and potentially more dangerous sites and services. A recent study showed that homicide rates dropped when online erotic services were available (https://thinkprogress.org/craigslist-erotic-services-platform-3eb46092717/). Only full decriminalization will allow for these types of online services and the opportunity for safer spaces for sex workers.

Conclusions
Full decriminalization is the only way to protect the safety of sex workers and therefore marginalized communities within South Africa. By leading the charge and decriminalizing sex work, South Africa can be an leading example for the rest of the world on this important social issue.