

## **Petition for the Decriminalisation of Sex Work**

The Sisonke National Movement together with the Aids Foundation South Africa (AFSA), stands in support of the decriminalisation of sex work, advocating for the rights, safety, and dignity of those involved in the sex industry. We believe that decriminalising sex work is a critical step toward a more just and equitable society, where all individuals are respected and protected under the law.

### **Reasons for Decriminalisation:**

**1. Human Rights and Personal Autonomy:**

Every individual has the right to make decisions about their own body, including choosing to engage in sex work. Criminalising this choice infringes upon the autonomy of sex workers, denying them the basic right to work safely and without fear of legal repercussions.

**2. Improved Safety and Protection:**

When sex work is criminalised, it drives the industry underground, making it more dangerous for those involved. Decriminalisation would enable workers to seek legal protection, report violence, and access support services without the fear of being arrested or harassed. It would also allow for better regulation and oversight, helping to prevent exploitation.

**3. Reducing Stigma and Discrimination:**

The criminalisation of sex work fuels stigma, discrimination, and marginalisation of sex workers. Decriminalising sex work helps dismantle harmful stereotypes and promotes a more compassionate society that values the dignity of all people, regardless of their occupation.

**4. Health and Well-being:**

Criminal laws prevent sex workers from accessing healthcare and social services, including sexual health services and mental health support. Decriminalisation would enable sex workers to access these services without fear of being arrested, leading to better overall health outcomes for workers and the broader community.

**5. Economic Justice:**

Many individuals turn to sex work as a means of survival due to limited economic opportunities. Decriminalising sex work would allow workers to operate within the

law, ensuring they can work safely, negotiate fair terms, and access legal protections like any other worker.

**6. International Precedents and Evidence:**

Countries such as New Zealand and parts of Australia have already decriminalised sex work, with positive results including reduced violence, improved health outcomes, and stronger worker rights. These examples demonstrate that decriminalisation is both feasible and beneficial.

**7. Ending Exploitation:**

The criminalisation of sex work perpetuates exploitation by allowing pimps, traffickers, and abusers to operate with impunity. Decriminalisation reduces the power of exploiters and offers greater protection for those who voluntarily enter the industry.

**8. Focus on Harm Reduction:**

Decriminalisation aligns with harm-reduction strategies, which aim to reduce the negative consequences of certain behaviours. By focusing on the safety and well-being of sex workers, rather than punishing them, society can create a more supportive and equitable environment for all.

**Our Call to Action:**

We urge lawmakers, governments, and communities worldwide to stand in solidarity with sex workers and support the decriminalisation of sex work. We call for policies that prioritise the protection, rights, and dignity of those involved in the sex industry, ensuring they are treated with respect, not criminalised.

By signing this petition, we commit to advocating for policies that decriminalise sex work, reduce stigma, and promote the rights and safety of sex workers. Together, we can create a world where all workers are treated fairly and with respect, regardless of the nature of their work.

**Sign the petition today for a more just and equitable society.**