

Universal Periodic Review of the United States of America
50th Session
Joint submission by:

The Sex Worker Rights Coalition

The Sex Worker Rights Coalition is a coalition of US based and global organizations that work together to advance the rights of sex workers at the United Nations.

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and the **Sexual Rights Initiative**

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Key words: right to work, developmental aid and assistance, rights of sex workers, rights of transgender and gender expansive persons, HIV/AIDS, access to health services, rights of migrant sex workers

Introduction

1. The following stakeholder report has been developed by the Sex Worker Rights Coalition and the Sexual Rights Initiative. It is being submitted for consideration during the Universal Periodic Review of the United States, although the government of the United States has purported to withdraw from the Human Rights Council, and it remains unclear whether they will choose to participate in the Universal Periodic Review. This is the latest in a series of actions undermining the enjoyment of human rights and indeed national accountability for human rights violations in the international sphere.
2. In this report we consider the impact of American foreign and domestic policies with particular reference to their impact on the rights of sex workers and transgender and gender expansive people. This submission is based on the ongoing work of the aforementioned organisations and the insights collected from a survey of 207 organizations, collectives, and community members advocating for trans rights and addressing the intersections of sex work and anti-trans legislation. One third (36 %) of respondents filling the individual experiences sections of the survey identified as trans or gender non-binary. Respondents describe their work as being situated in grassroots organizing, harm reduction, legal rights education, and direct outreach to marginalized communities, particularly trans and sex worker populations.
3. Many respondents highlighted systemic injustices such as police violence, discrimination, and a lack of access to justice, as issues which disproportionately impact trans people, especially those engaged in sex work. Activists highlighted the need to continue to advocate for the repealing of anti-trans laws, the reform of policing and migration practices in the country, underscoring the complex and intersecting barriers to the full enjoyment of their human rights that these communities face. The information we gathered reveals a significant gap in support structures, with many respondents noting the inability of affected community members to seek justice or receive adequate help. This report provides a critical lens into the lived realities of trans people and sex workers, emphasizing the urgent need for systemic change and global advocacy.
4. It has become increasingly evident, given a recent regressive report issued by a special rapporteur mandate on sex work, that the human rights of sex workers are considered by some to be up for contention. Thus we emphasize the importance of proactively including the insights of sex workers and trans people in all human rights mechanisms (and indeed in the stakeholder summary report) in order to ensure that their human rights are not undermined through regressive framing of rights related to gender and sexuality, and the normalisation of this regressive framing. Through this stakeholder submission and indeed others made by the sex worker and trans and gender expansive movement in the United States we underscore the need to acknowledge the importance of sex workers' wisdom and leadership in rebuilding more resilient systems that are rooted in community care and local collaborations rather than dependence on a system whose aims are fundamentally contrary to liberation for all. If movements can come together with mutual respect and the support of allies, global human rights advocacy will be better for it.

5. Individually and collectively, sex workers resist narratives of erasure that flatten their experiences into two dimensional lives marked by violence and lack of agency. In addition to the creation of new and more responsive organizations, respondents report finding novel ways to navigate the incoming hostilities and thrive. Sex work income has facilitated financial freedom, families' survival, continued education, healthcare access, and improved wellbeing for respondents. Sex work must be decriminalised, and reparations must be made to those who have suffered the negative impacts of its criminalisation.
6. Respondents describe their efforts to create safe spaces and provide essential resources for trans and sex worker communities. For example, one collective from the Pacific Northwest does street outreach and hold know-your-rights trainings for sex workers, while also building harm reduction resources like Narcan access. This reflects a holistic approach that combines direct support with empowerment through education. Another respondent from Honolulu underscores the grassroots nature of their work: *"We are a grassroots group that provides direct aid to sex workers, including food, legal support, and housing assistance, while advocating for the decriminalization of sex work."*
7. These narratives illustrate the dual focus on immediate needs—such as harm reduction and legal assistance—and long-term systemic change, including policy reform and social acceptance. Collectives operating in diverse regions, from Honolulu to New Orleans, emphasize the critical need to address overlapping forms of marginalization, particularly for Black trans women and trans migrants.

Criminalisation undermines the right to work and the right to freedom from violence for sex workers

8. Unfortunately, the United States did not receive any recommendations on the rights of sex workers during the last UPR review. However it received a number of recommendations pertinent to sex worker activists and the communities they represent including the following accepted recommendations:
 - 26.114 Resolutely combat all forms of discrimination by guaranteeing equitable access to justice, medical care and quality education, as well as by ensuring that the use of force and firearms by the police is in compliance with human rights (Switzerland);
 - 26.148 Strengthen measures to prevent and combat violence, especially the rate of murder of transgender women of colour, as well as the violence experienced by the broader lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community (Malta);
 - 26.163 Take further and more targeted measures to address the disproportionate impact of violence on the poor, minorities and immigrant women, and expedite the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Botswana)(accepted);
 - 26.254 Ensure systematic accountability and full and prompt redress for victims in cases of police misconduct and brutality;
9. Sex work in the United States is criminalised in almost every state, with the exception of some counties in Nevada where it is highly regulated. Some forms of sexual commerce, such as dancing and stripping, may not be prohibited by state legislation but are almost always heavily

regulated by state and municipal policies, which may, for example, mandate registration through a law enforcement database. Many other laws may be used to criminalize the lives of sex workers including restrictions on being in public space (anti loitering, anti-camping, and trespass statutes) and providing services such as massage “without a license.” In 2018 the U.S. passed federal restrictions via the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) and Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) limiting the sharing of vital safety information for sex workers online and causing economic harm and social marginalization.

10. Sex work and trafficking are continually conflated by the United States harming sex workers and sex worker organizing. The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act (TVPA) tasked the federal government with the eradication of various sex crimes, including ‘trafficking’, in the name of protecting women. These provisions do not distinguish between sex workers and those who are in conditions of forced labor. The TVPA set the US up as the authority to monitor ‘anti-trafficking’ efforts around the world, with sanctions for countries it deems unresponsive to the issue. To enforce these standards, the TVPA provides for the creation of an anti-Trafficking task force with dedicated spots for certain stakeholders - despite the legislation directly impacting their safety, livelihoods, and their right to work - sex workers are excluded.
11. A significant concern we have highlighted in all our reporting during the prior three Universal Periodic Reviews is the pervasive police harassment of and violence against transgender sex workers. Criminalisation creates conditions of increased precarity, and makes sex work less safe. We have reported on the issue of increased risk of violence faced by sex workers and transgender sex workers in particular in every cycle of the UPR, and we are finding in our own current research that this situation continues. Other mainstream organizations independently find the same. For example, the Transgender Law Center reports that “nine in ten trans sex workers report being harassed, attacked, or assaulted by the police,” with many being coerced into sexual acts to avoid arrest¹. This systemic abuse underscores the urgent need for decriminalizing sex work and the ending of criminalization of our lives in general, to protect trans lives. This approach is also emphasized by the ACLU.²
12. Through the survey, we received harrowing accounts of systemic violations against trans people and sex workers. Respondents report being targeted by police, subjected to violence, and excluded from justice mechanisms. One respondent describes a scenario involving sexual assault and police misconduct, noting that even when crimes are reported, they are often met with disbelief or further abuse by law enforcement. Another respondent highlighted the pervasive fear within their community, stating that people avoid reporting crimes because they fear being arrested or outed as trans or a sex worker.
13. The inability to access justice is a recurring theme. Many respondents note that affected individuals often cannot seek help due to systemic biases or fear of retaliation. Community members could not get help or seek justice because the police were the perpetrators. These stories highlight the cyclical nature of harm, where those most in need of protection are further marginalized by the very systems meant to serve them.
14. These issues are intensified by the broader legislative landscape, where an increasing number of anti-trans bills are being introduced. As of early 2025, nearly 120 anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+

¹ [Transgender Law Center](#)

² [American Civil Liberties Union](#)

bills have been filed across the United States, surpassing previous records and signaling a challenging year ahead for transgender and queer communities. These legislative efforts often intersect with issues of sex work, further marginalizing trans people engaged in this line of work.

15. Our current findings and accounts of violence against transgender people align with reports of an ongoing epidemic of such violence. The [Human Rights Campaign](#) documented at least 36 deaths of transgender and gender-expansive individuals in 2024, with Black transgender women constituting 61% of these fatalities. This alarming trend highlights the compounded risks faced by transgender sex workers, who are often at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities.
16. When asked to prioritize issues for reporting to the UN, respondents overwhelmingly point to the intersection of trans rights and sex work issues with anti-trans laws. One collective frames the issue succinctly: Anti-trans laws criminalize our existence and push sex workers further into the shadows, increasing vulnerability to violence and exploitation. Policing also emerges as a critical area of concern, with respondents advocating for reforms to address discriminatory practices and over-policing of trans and sex worker communities. One group calls for organizing to defund police or change police practices that disproportionately harm trans people and sex workers.
17. Other priorities include addressing migration-related challenges and advocating for the decriminalization of sex work. Respondents link these issues to broader systemic inequities, with one participant stating that trans migrants face compounded discrimination, being targeted not only for their gender identity but also for their immigration status, leaving them vulnerable to human rights violations.
18. Sex work criminalization has emerged in the Global North as a convenient means to stem the migration of gender minorities and non-white travelers. In the US, migrant sex workers fear deportation whether or not they are currently working in the sex trades. One survey respondent writes “Immigration says its not a full ban, but if you say yes to having [ever] engaged in prostitution then you can be denied [a visa] (and people have been) and if you say “no” and you speak later about having done sex work then they could get you for lying on an official form or lying to immigration officer”. Anti Trafficking initiatives supported by the U.S. in The States and countries engaging with their anti-trafficking goals do not offer a path to citizenship, permanent residency, or comparably lucrative employment. Very often, migrants arrested in sex work raids are deported regardless of whether their circumstances meet the state’s definition of trafficking.
19. Migrant sex workers swept up in trafficking stings report that regardless of their assertions whether they identify as a trafficked person or not, they are incarcerated and face deportation. The US government does not publish a record of the number of persons deported for prostitution, though it states that a persons with sex work experience can be banned from entering the US for 5-10 years. Much has been made of visas potentially being offered to trafficked persons. In 2000, the TVPA authorized 10,000 ‘T’ visas per year. However, across all 6 ‘T’ visa categories that cover victims of severe trafficking and their families only 554 visas were issued in 2023 and 306 in 2022.
20. As will be discussed in greater detail in the section on the impact of the United States’ foreign policy on the rights of sex workers and and LGBT+ persons, the impact of the extraterritorial application of American legislation and policies through aid conditionalities, has the effect of coercing donor recipient countries to comply with American policies on sexual rights. This has

included the condoning of the conflation of sex work and trafficking, under pain of economic sanctions and aid withdrawal. The United States also judges countries' anti-trafficking measures with their annual Trafficking in Persons Report. In this report it ranks countries' anti Trafficking efforts in a four tiered ranking. Tier 1 countries comply with US standards for Trafficking interventions and results. These include mainly Western European countries, Canada, and the United States with few developing countries included. The tier 2 list swells to encompass most of the Global South. These are countries that are not meeting the US' expectations, but are making efforts to comply with the imposed standards. There is also a tier 2 watchlist of countries that are not making efforts to meet the US expectations. Finally, tier 3 countries are not compliant and are making no effort to comply.³

21. Raids on sex workers and their places of work impose public health dangers on sex workers and their clients. Condoms are often used as evidence in prosecuting sex work and trafficking cases. This makes carrying condoms, a life saving measure, also a major legal liability whether or not one is working.

Right to health and access to health services

22. The United States received a number of recommendations on the need to ensure the full enjoyment of the right to health, and access to health services including the following accepted or partially accepted recommendations:
- 26.146 Take all possible steps at the state and federal levels to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in credit, education, employment, housing, jury service, public accommodation and taxpayer-funded programmes (Belgium)(accepted);
 - 26.288 Protect expanded and equitable access to health care (Poland)(accepted);
 - 26.289 Take concrete steps to ensure the enjoyment of the human right to health by all its people without discrimination (Portugal)(partially accepted);
 - 26.290 Take further measures to make health-care services accessible to vulnerable people not supported by the current health system (Angola)(accepted);
 - 26.291 Take measures for providing health-care services to all without prejudice to race, economic situation and citizenship status of persons under its jurisdiction (Azerbaijan);
 - 26.293 Ensure access to health care, drugs and treatment to all segments of society (Iraq);
23. Currently, the United States falls short of the AAAQ standards for the enjoyment of the right to health, as health services are not universally accessible, acceptable, available, and of good quality. The survey highlights significant barriers to healthcare access for trans people, particularly those engaged in sex work. Respondents reported challenges accessing gender-affirming care, including hormone therapy and respectful treatment from providers. Some described being denied care outright, or relying on community-led mutual aid for basic health services.

³ "What Is the TIP Report?" *IJM USA*, www.ijm.org/news/what-is-the-tip-report.

24. Grassroots groups are stepping in to fill gaps, offering everything from STI testing to housing and mental health support. These responses point to systemic neglect and the critical role of peer-led care networks in meeting trans people's health needs. Sex workers have managed to create parallel structures to support the meeting of their healthcare and other material needs, and it is clear that sex workers must be respected as subject matter experts in HIV and STI prevention as they are on the frontlines of grassroots prevention efforts. Our survey responses show that sex workers have built resilient systems for distributing resources and information to marginalized populations. Sex workers, particularly Queer and Trans sex workers, as the most vulnerable to policy changes, have valuable insight into navigating onerous restrictions on funding without compromising human rights objectives.
25. However, changing laws and the threat of discrimination prevents trans folks from accessing full gender affirming care as one respondent said, *"with the laws always changing you are not sure if trans health care is going to be helping you still or not"*. Moreover the fear of losing care is in its own right harmful, since without certainty of continued care trans folk have reported being unsure if they should even try to access care.

"My access to hormones is dependent on seeing a doctor in person instead of virtually or even just getting hormones over the counter like I think other countries do. Also people are afraid of the anti trans laws getting worse so they are moving out of state and this is making it harder to build community."

"I am profoundly affected by both existing and proposed legislation targeting trans rights, reproductive healthcare, and sex work. State law which prohibit gender-affirming care for minors, not only deny essential healthcare to trans youth but also reduce the availability of such care for adults due to increased scrutiny and legal risks faced by providers. This exacerbates the already significant challenges in accessing necessary medical services."

Impact of the export and support of whorephobia through US overseas development aid conditionalities

26. As with the last time that the United States was reviewed under the UPR - the sitting government has reinstated the Mexico City Policy and the Helms Amendment continues to be in force, disrupting the provision of sexual and reproductive health services in those places where it provides development assistance. The United States received a number of recommendations on this issue, which it accepted:
- 26.299 Lift funding restrictions on United States foreign assistance to promote women's full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (Norway);
 - 26.302 Reverse policies inhibiting comprehensive and universal access to voluntary sexual and reproductive health services, especially in emergency situations, and end related restrictions on foreign assistance (Austria);
 - 26.303 Take action to support equitable access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services, and review policies that effectively limit foreign assistance for sexual and reproductive health and rights services abroad (Canada);

- 26.311 Repeal the Helms Amendment and the Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance Policy and, in the interim, allow United States foreign assistance to be used, at a minimum, for safe abortion in cases of rape, incest and life endangerment (Netherlands);
- 26.312 Ensure that its international aid allows access to sexual and reproductive health services (New Zealand);

27. Through the survey we also collected information about the impact of US policies on sex workers in other countries. The United States has often portrayed itself as the “moral compass” in countries where it provides developmental aid. However the situation is more complex than initially meets the eye. Rather than being a global, neutral, force for human rights, critical US aid often comes with strings attached. These limitations and conditionalities have long been out of touch with local needs and have been harmful to movements and marginalized groups of people.
28. In the case of sex workers and sex worker organizing, aid conditionalities attached to HIV/AIDS funding and other aid programs have attempted to undercut the full realisation of the right to health by requiring that states refrain from creating an enabling environment for intervention. Whereas UNAIDS and other multilateral agencies and bodies highlight the importance of the decriminalisation of sex work and of sexual and gender identity in ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights, the conditionalities attached to American aid works to undercut this stance. The US has attempted to silence issues, such as the decriminalization of sex work and access to full reproductive rights, literally via “gag rules” that prevent anyone who receives funds from speaking out, organizing and providing certain services. For example, the Mexico City Policy “the global gag rule” prohibits foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who receive U.S. global health assistance from providing legal abortion services or referrals, while also barring advocacy for abortion law reform—even if it’s done with the NGO’s own, non-U.S. funds. The policy allows access to abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or when a woman’s life is at risk.
29. With regards to sex work, the key Federal policy programs that have guided the US’ international crusade against sex workers are the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) that sets priorities and oversees billions of dollars in HIV funding, and anti-trafficking policies. The Anti Prostitution Loyalty Oath (APLO) requires any organization receiving funding directly or indirectly from PEPFAR to commit to not use funds to support or promote “legalization or practice of prostitution”, or support organizations that have not signed the pledge. This silences and erases the voices of people who engage in the sex trades as a way to survive or create a better life for themselves. The US government is complicit in the continued criminalisation and marginalisation of sex workers, queer and trans people, and people seeking sexual and reproductive health services worldwide. Further, it has publicly refused to fund actions to support the human rights of queer and trans people and sex workers, and limited access to vital information about rights and healthcare.
30. Around the world, sex workers’ right to free movement has been severely curtailed in response to pressure from the U.S. government to reduce the number of persons migrating to the U.S. to engage in sex work. Migrant sex workers report taking extra precautions to protect themselves while traveling though they are still often unduly detained at borders. Restrictions on movement compounds the harms done to developing countries’ economies by trade and aid agreements that restrict local investments by citizens. Through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

of which the United States is a signatory, and the drafting committee of which it chaired, the United Nations recognizes the right to movement as a fundamental human right. This right includes the right to leave a country, including one's own. Arbitrary detention of citizens or visitors traveling through countries that are under scrutiny by the U.S. not only violates people's human rights, it also restricts the measures sex workers can take to travel safely. Irregular migration, unlike sanctioned migration, cannot be controlled by legislation, and so, when sanctioned migration is tightly restricted, travelers will turn to informal avenues to pursue their needs. This act of self preservation is often characterized as "trafficking".

31. On the African continent, US-based actors have worked to eradicate sex work through government policy and LGBTQ+ persons through evangelical religious influence. In 2009 in Uganda, a group of evangelical pastors kicked off a campaign against homosexuality that incorporated local churches, governments, and civilians in targeting LGBTQ+ persons. Respondents from Uganda report that the US evangelical influence on legislation has been felt deeply in transgender sex worker communities. Uganda's most recent Anti Homosexuality Act is a direct result of lobbying by US-based hate groups⁴. This law has compounded the hostility prescribed in colonial law which Uganda retains. Over more than two decades, the campaign has led to increasingly discriminatory laws targeting persons profiled as belonging to LGBTQ+ and/or sex worker communities.
32. Trans women and trans persons engaging in sex work report being targeted by police. One respondent describes the challenges they faced, stating "I have been detained for doing sex work in Uganda. I have been arrested many times." Crucially the respondent, a sex workers' rights advocate states that "I was arrested before I became an activist, but when I knew my rights I could challenge them and they could not arrest me." This statement echoes the importance of information outreach to sex workers' rights. Often detention is a matter of perceived identity rather than a law violated. Respondents indicate that knowing their rights can sometimes mitigate the harms perpetrated by law enforcement. However, as US policies force laws to become more draconian to meet anti-trafficking standards, that protection is eroded.
33. Our research shows that there has been a marked increase in rights violating actions in the last four to five years. A spate of US Evangelical backed anti-homosexuality laws across the continent have compounded the consequences for queer and trans persons. One Ghanaian respondent wrote to us that, "The anti gay bill (Proper human sexual rights and family values bill) that is going to be passed on the 28th of this month has and is really causing a lot of fear and panic." Respondents highlight the 2021 Ho 21 incident in Ho district, Ghana as an example of harassment growing out of increasingly oppressive attempts to control LGBTQ+ and sex working persons. In the Ho 21 incident, Ghanians were detained for advocating for "LGBTQ+ activities"⁵ while conducting community training sessions. One respondent writes, "In the Ho 21

⁴ Best Practices Policy Project. "Queer and Trans Ugandans Combat State Violence in the Anti-Homosexuality Act. | [Bestpracticespolicy.org](https://bestpracticespolicy.org)." *Bestpracticespolicy.org*, 29 Sept. 2023, www.bestpracticespolicy.org/2023/09/29/queer-and-trans-ugandans-combat-state-violence-in-the-anti-homosexuality-act/. Accessed 13 Feb. 2025.

⁵ Akinwotu, Emmanuel. "Outcry after 21 People Arrested in Ghana for "Advocating LGBTQ Activities."" *The Guardian*, 24 May 2021,

case, a group of sex workers, including trans individuals, were brutally detained and harassed by law enforcement officers, facing physical and verbal abuse simply because of [their] identities and jobs... the Ho 21 incident revealed the broader issue of systemic discrimination within our criminal justice system, where the lack of legal protections made it almost impossible to seek justice or accountability.”

34. This sentiment is echoed by advocates in Malawi who report that “Six months after Malawi's Constitution Court upheld laws criminalizing homosexuality, homophobic attacks on LGBTQ [persons] have escalated, leaving many in fear for their safety and security.” In Malawi, people convicted of “carnal knowledge against the order of nature”⁶ are punished by 14 and 5 years imprisonment respectively⁷. Sixty-seven percent of LGBTQ+ respondents report being affected by proposed or enacted anti-trans laws.
35. As we write this report in March of 2025 we are facing a chaotic situation in regards to US global policy. The current US administration has increased the pressure on organizations serving marginalized people by cutting off global humanitarian aid suddenly and without consideration for the impact on healthcare systems that have incorporated US aid into service delivery. Despite restrictions, many sex workers and people living with HIV accessed life saving treatment through US aid programs. The impact of current events is devastating to our communities within the US and globally.

Global organizing and resistance by sex workers and gender expansive folks

36. From the information we gathered by surveying 207 organizations and community members clearly shows that in the last 4 years, policing of sex workers disproportionately affects Queer and Trans persons. Eighty-eight percent of our self identified LGBTQ+ respondents indicate that being Trans/Gender non-binary affects their work and rights with 30% indicating that members of their communities have been killed. Of our self identified LGBTQ+ respondents, 28% have experienced abuse or violence and 15% have been targeted by the police for their gender identity and expression.
37. Despite this risk of harm made worse by the US mandate to eliminate and erase sex workers and trans identity, organizers work to secure their communities through mutual aid and information networks. The injustices of the past 5 years have spurred action. Respondents identified over 25 organizations that have formed or expanded in response to evolving needs within queer and trans and sex worker communities. These organizations engage in policy advocacy, direct actions, service provision, mutual aid, and facilitate support spaces for persons impacted by US policies. The BSWC's Ghana chapter has organized support and education outreach for sex worker communities. In Malawi, Liwonde Female Sex Workers Alliance (LIFESA) report that their communities have had success in informing each other of

www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/24/outcry-people-arrested-ghana-advocating-lgbtq-activities.

⁶ *Laws.Africa Legislation Commons Malawi Penal Code*. 2014.

⁷ “Malawi | Human Dignity Trust.” *Www.humandignitytrust.org.*, www.humandignitytrust.org/country-profile/malawi/.

their rights and as a result have built “increased resilience of sex workers to discrimination and violence by police officers.”

38. The funding cuts being implemented by the Trump administration are especially cruel after decades of forcing organizations to bend to their will at the expense of vulnerable populations. Restrictions imposed on organizations have limited the building of human rights-aligned systems outside of the US aid framework, as the goal of US aid is to secure US foreign interests. One major impact is the way aid cuts have been implemented. The mandate has eliminated HIV medication access for many people who may or may not have experience in the sex trades. Sex worker organizing has been sidelined by the US government and subsequently by other aid organizations receiving funds from the US government.
39. Sex workers have— from the beginning— had to create infrastructure with support from allies who are aligned with their values. This model is key to continued survival as the range of socially sanctioned ways to exist shrink, and more groups find themselves even further marginalized. While BIPOC trans and queer folks bear the brunt of discriminatory policies, sex worker organizing’s worldwide longevity is proof that the loss of US funding is not the end of any robust movement. The individual and collective successes described in the survey by respondents and in background research show that US government funding can be a means of trying to control movement objectives. Organizations continue to form and engage in radical liberatory work for our communities without direct access to government funding. Sex workers have always navigated legal gray areas. In these spaces, criminalized persons carve out some safety and cultivate ways of existing in communities that can withstand shifting policy objectives and repression. Admittedly, it is a difficult transition for the world to make suddenly and all at once.
40. We are human rights advocates, community members and service providers. We are appalled by the actions of the current US administration such as the sudden halting of all US global aid funding (and attempts to halt funding within the US). The sudden nature of this loss has compounded the harm and chaos caused. Changes to US aid policy costs lives within and beyond BIPOC, queer and trans, and sex worker communities because we are all interconnected. The acceptance of US aid comes at a steep price. The price of the loss of this support that was never meant to foster trans and sex worker populations’ agency and wellbeing long term, is also steep. However, now that this situation, which is out of the control of communities like ours, has occurred, we call on advocates in the US, globally and among representatives of the United Nations to push for something better than what we have had to endure.
41. This moment of apparent divestment from humanitarian programs like US Agency for International Development (USAID) is an— albeit painful— opportunity for the public and nonprofit sectors to realign organizational policies with human rights goals to restore agency to vulnerable populations in solidarity with sex workers. Programs like USAID can be tools of global solidarity. USAID, PEPFAR and other aid schemes are fundamentally flawed, but they are (by design) also among few options for large scale funding in the current landscape. A collective effort among impacted nations could yield an effort that is more responsive to all people’s needs, provided that US divestment includes divestment from economic oppression in developing countries. For example, humanitarian aid is not a remedy for countries the US forces to underinvest in their residents through restrictions on using development funding to promote

local quality of life improvements like social welfare and agrarian reform. Limitations on social safety nets, diverse economies and self determination have alienated entire populations from their human rights. Organizations like USAID, the WTO and the IMF stand in the gap.

Recommendations for action

We call on the United States to:

1. Decriminalize and destigmatize sex work and people in the sex trade as a policy priority within and outside of the United States.
2. Repeal the global gag rule and the Hayes amendment
3. Repeal anti-sex work policies like the Anti Prostitution Loyalty Oath (APLO) and those codified in the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act .
4. Repeal anti-trans laws and provide support to those who have been harmed
5. End how the US uses funding and foreign aid to harm groups such as BIPOC, Queer, Trans, Gender Expansive folks and Sex Workers. Create new funding approaches based on the promotion of human rights and health.
6. End policing and carceral systems.