



City of Cambridge

POR 2026-184
FIRST IN COUNCIL
September 28, 2026

COUNCILLOR SOBRINHO-WHEELER
COUNCILLOR MCGOVERN
MAYOR SIDDIQUI
COUNCILLOR NOLAN

WHEREAS: The [Human Services & Veterans Committee held a hearing in May 2025](#) on sex work and sex trafficking to consult with various stakeholders and community members on these issues; and

WHEREAS: Part of that meeting focused on how the criminalization of consensual adult sex work in Massachusetts has contributed to sex workers' increased exposure to violence, economic instability, housing insecurity, deportation, incarceration, trafficking, exploitation, and barriers to accessing health care, legal protections, and public safety resources; and

WHEREAS: Empirical research finds that criminalizing consensual adult sex work discourages individuals from reporting violence, exploitation, or trafficking due to fear of arrest or prosecution; and

WHEREAS: Empirical research also finds that people with marginalized identities and societal positionality such as undocumented, transgender, and unhoused people, as well as people who struggle with substance abuse, become sex workers as a means of survival; and

WHEREAS: The City Council expressly opposes sex trafficking, the sexual exploitation of minors, violence, and abuse in all forms; and

WHEREAS: Evidence demonstrates that the vast majority of sex workers enter the sex industry due to economic need, and supporting people in the industry needs to involve a dual approach of providing material resources so people can leave the sex industry if they wish to, and guaranteeing labor rights and protections from discrimination to those who choose to continue working in the industry; and

WHEREAS: The City Council recognizes the legal and factual distinction between consensual adult sex work and sex trafficking, which under 18 USC §1591 involves using force, fraud, or coercion (hereinafter, "unlawful means") to compel another person to engage in a commercial sex act; and

WHEREAS: Consensual adult sex workers frequently increase their safety by working with other adults, sharing workspaces, sharing housing expenses, hiring security or screening services, and engaging in mutual aid arrangements that reduce vulnerability to violence, theft, and trafficking; now therefore be it

- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the relevant staff and departments to implement the recommendations following the May 2025 Human Services & Veterans Committee meeting, such as strengthening anti-poverty measures, establishing a dedicated CARE Team call and referral line, prioritizing commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking prevention efforts for LGBTQIA+ youth, and report back to the City Council on progress; and be it further
- ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the relevant staff and departments, including the Cambridge Public Health Department and the Domestic and Gender Based Violence Prevention Initiative, to report back on how sex workers can reach health, harm reduction, and victim services without being reported to police; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record to hereby express its belief that the arrest of adult persons for consensual sex work should continue to be amongst the lowest law enforcement priorities for the City of Cambridge; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the City Council expresses its belief that the Middlesex County District Attorney should cease prosecution of persons for consensual adult sex work and cease prosecution of persons who provide support services to sex workers absent unlawful means; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record urging the State House to support efforts to achieve the full decriminalization of consensual adult sex work statewide; and be it further
- ORDERED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward suitably engrossed copies of this Policy Order to Cambridge's delegation to the Massachusetts General Court, the Middlesex County District Attorney, the Massachusetts Governor, and the Massachusetts Attorney General on behalf of the entire City Council.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-



Paula M. Crane,
Interim City Clerk