



# Freedom Network USA

Special Rapporteur on the right to health

Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng

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VIA EMAIL

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Ms. Mofokeng:

Freedom Network USA (FNUSA) submits the following comments for your report: Drug policies and responses: a right to health framework on harm reduction. FNUSA is the United States' largest coalition of service providers and advocates working directly with human trafficking survivors and is committed to the human rights-based approach to human trafficking. Our 90+ members include survivors, legal and social service providers, academics, and advocates.

Within the context of human trafficking in the United States, drugs are used both as a coping mechanism by victims and survivors and as a tool for coercion by traffickers. Harm reduction responses to drug use help ensure survivors are able to access services, achieve stability, and find safe jobs, rather than face criminalization and further harm.

#### **4. Beyond reducing the health, social, and legal consequences of drug use, what other areas can benefit from harm reduction policies, programmes, and practices in furtherance of the right to health and related human rights?**

The harm reduction approach should be further applied to sex work to ensure the safety of workers and reduce potential vulnerabilities to human trafficking. Sex work is made unsafe by laws and policies that criminalize sex work for both buyers and workers. In addition to the full decriminalization of sex work, harm reduction tactics can be used to ensure workers have access to material items and community care to keep them safe.<sup>i</sup>

Increasing the safety of sex workers and ensuring harm reduction efforts are community-led, protects sex workers from exploitation and human trafficking. Some harm reduction services that increase sex worker safety include the distribution of condoms and other sexual health supplies; improving access to food, housing, and medical care; syringe exchanges and Narcan/overdose prevention education; and circulation of safety information like bad date lists.<sup>ii</sup> Many of these services are already provided by community-based sex worker rights organizations. Resourcing these organizations so they can provide increased services is a necessary step in promoting the harm reduction approach.

FNUSA and the National Survivor Network released a set of guidelines for human trafficking service providers to work more collaboratively with sex worker safety advocates.<sup>iii</sup> Many of the harms sex workers face from criminalization are directly linked to anti-trafficking efforts. Survivors of trafficking are also criminalized in the United States under these same laws. In

order to repair this harm, the report highlights ways anti-trafficking organizations can support sex workers' safety efforts, including vital harm reduction outreach.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Senior Policy Specialist  
Freedom Network USA

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<sup>i</sup> National Harm Reduction Coalition, "Sex Work and Harm Reduction," <https://harmreduction.org/issues/sex-work/harm-reduction-facts/>

<sup>ii</sup> Freedom Network USA and National Survivor Coalition, "Re-Centering Sex Worker Safety in Anti-Trafficking Work: Perspectives from the Field." <https://freedomnetworkusa.org/app/uploads/2023/10/Recentering-Sex-Worker-Safety-in-Anti-Trafficking-Work.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.