



**Testimony by DCTC member Nico Quintana
before the DC Council Committee on the Judiciary
Opposing Bill 19-567, the Prostitution Free Zone Amendment Act of 2011
Tuesday, January 24, 2012**

Good morning Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee on the Judiciary. My name is Nico Quintana, and I am testifying on behalf of the DC Trans Coalition (DCTC) to express opposition to B19-567, the Prostitution Free Zone Amendment Act. The DC Trans Coalition is a grassroots, community-based organization dedicated to fighting for the human rights, dignity and equal access for transgender, transsexual and gender-diverse people in the District of Columbia. As a Latino, transgender DC resident, and a proud member of the DC Trans Coalition, I am here today to respectfully express my fervent opposition to this measure because I believe that it will bring further violence and discrimination to the DC trans community, my community.

Transgender people in the District of Columbia are experiencing high rates of violence, brutality, harassment, and discrimination. Phase one of the DC Trans Needs Assessment published this past July found that nearly all 108 roundtable discussion participants identified issues of safety and security as top concerns. Safety concerns reported by roundtable discussion participants included physical violence and harassment from the general population and police. In the past year, there has been a surge of violence against transgender people in the District of Columbia. Transgender women of color have been the primary targets of the violence. According to reports provided by MPD, there have been at least 30 violent attacks on transgender women in DC since mid-July. While the District of Columbia has some of the most progressive and inclusive human rights laws and bias crime statutes in the nation, more trans people have been murdered in DC in the past decade than in any other U.S. city. Our laws and policies are not keeping trans people safe.

Prostitution free zones are actively contributing to this violence. Due to the reduced standards of probable cause required to arrest people in PFZ's, these zones have become transgender-profiling zones, and are being used to harass and criminalize trans people.

Transgender communities experience high rates of poverty, homelessness, and employment discrimination. This can be seen in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey released in 2011. Transgender people of color are at particularly high risk of discrimination-related poverty, stemming from considerable institutional discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment, education, healthcare and housing.

Sex work is employment. When other forms of employment are not accessible to someone due to transphobia, employment discrimination, education inequities, etc., sex work can be an employment opportunity. Instead of punishing working people, and further

marginalizing transgender communities, I recommend the District government continue its efforts to address poverty and employment inequities in the DC transgender community, like it is doing through Project Empowerment.

Additionally, please note an attorney who works with our coalition will be submitting written testimony detailing how the proposed law is unconstitutional.

In closing, I strongly urge the District of Columbia Council to oppose Prostitution-Free Zones. Do not condone further brutality and discrimination against DC trans residents.

Respectfully,

Nico Quintana

Attachments:

DC Trans Needs Assessment – Summary Findings, Phase 1, July 2011.

Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.