

FAMILY ISSUES FACT SHEET

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SEX BUYER PENALTIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under current Arizona law, the punishment for purchasing a human being for sexual pleasure is equivalent to trespassing, being noisy in public, or minor shoplifting. Clearly, the law is giving misdemeanor penalties to a crime that devastates lives. Right now, solicitation and selling of sex is a class 1 misdemeanor—a mere slap on the wrist. This doesn’t adequately address the harm inflicted on victims of transactional sex and sex trafficking. This bill serves to increase penalties for solicitation of sex to a class 6 felony. This will reduce demand for sex, and thereby reduce sex trafficking, protecting young girls and women.

WHAT THE BILL DOES

- Increases penalties for buying sex to a non-appealable Class 6 Felony.** Increased penalties are proven to reduce demand for sex, thereby reducing prostitution.
- Separates prostitution classification into “buyers” and “sellers”.** Currently, the classification in Arizona law lumps buyers and sellers of sex into “prostitution” as a whole. This will create clarity with distinct and appropriate penalties for violators.

TALKING POINTS

- Arizona can’t fight trafficking if it ignores demand.** Traffickers go where buyers are. Elevating penalties for purchasing sex targets the driving force behind exploitation and reduces the marketplace that fuels trafficking.
- A Class 6 felony isn’t about punishment, it’s about prevention.** Higher penalties reduce repeat buyers, deter first-time offenders, and make Arizona a harder market for traffickers to operate in.
- Clarity in the law begins by separating buyers and sellers.** Current statute lumps buying and selling together, blurring the roles of those exploited and those exploiting. Creating a distinct felony for buyers provides clarity and justice.

CONCLUSION

Arizona needs to address demand for exploitation of young girls and women. Increasing buyer penalties serves to reduce demand, curb trafficking, and protect our most vulnerable from sexual violence, violation, and harm.

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