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For Immediate Release

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BREAKING: U.S. ACKNOWLEDGES HUMAN RIGHTS NEEDS OF SEX WORKERS

At UN, US Says No one Should Face Discrimination For Public Services, Including Sex Workers

March 9th, 2011- According to their statement in response to the UN's human rights evaluation, the US agrees that "...no one should face violence or discrimination in access to public services based on sexual orientation or their status as a person in prostitution." This marks a rare occasion in which the US is addressing the needs of sex workers as a distinct issue separate from human trafficking. Sex workers have unique needs that aren't adequately addressed by federal trafficking policy. Sex workers are hopeful that this will present a new opportunity to work with anti-trafficking efforts to address mutual human rights concerns.

"People in the sex trade have been marginalized and stigmatized when seeking public services, including through law enforcement. This is a big step forward to acknowledging sex workers' human rights." **Kelli Dorsey, Executive Director of Different Avenues said.**

Over the past year sex workers and their families, sex workers' rights groups, human rights advocates, and academic researchers have engaged in an unprecedented advocacy collaboration. "It has been crucial to bring together the perspectives of a wide range of communities including immigrant and LGBT groups in order to illustrate the depth of human rights violations experienced by sex workers in the United States," **says Penelope Saunders, Coordinator of the Best Practices Policy Project**, who worked with the Desiree Alliance to send a shadow report to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). These initial efforts resulted in Recommendation 86 and the formation of a group called Human Rights For All: Concerned Advocates for the Rights of Sex Workers and People in the Sex Trade (HRA).

HRA had support from more than 125 organizations in urging law makers to accept Recommendation #86, part of the report of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which called on the US to look into the special vulnerability of sex workers to violence and human rights abuses. "We were long overdue for the United States to take the needs of sex workers seriously, particularly the need to stem violence and discrimination," **says attorney Sienna Baskin, Co-Director of Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center in New York.**

"Human beings cannot be excluded from accesible services because they work in economies outside of society's accepted norms," **explains Cristine Sardina, co-director, Desiree Alliance.** "The fact that the U.S. has acknowledged the recommendation in full speaks to the current administration's willingness to recognize the abuses sex workers have been subjected to for too long. We look forward to working with this administration".

Sex workers say the issues they face are complex and more work will have to be done to protect against human rights abuses. "Sex workers who are transgender or people of color face the most violence and it's important that we continue to realize and work towards

ending that, this is a good first step.” **Said Tara Sawyer, who sits on the Board of Directors of the Sex Workers Outreach Project USA.**

On Friday March 18th Sex Workers will stage demonstrations in cities across the country to celebrate adoption of Recommendation #86. “The U.S. has finally acknowledged that sex workers face issues separate from those of human trafficking victims,” **said Natalie Brewster Nguyen, an artist and member of the Sex Workers Outreach Project of Tucson who is organizing the demonstrations on the 18th,** “Now we need to demand that steps be taken to address the issues that will actually improve the daily lives of sex workers.”

For more information on this story or the upcoming March 18th demonstrations, please contact Stacey Swimme at Communications@StJamesInfirmary.org or (877) 776-2004 x. 2

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