Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	2025-1976 **Version:** 1		
Type:	Ordinance	**Status:**	Passed Finally
File created:	6/23/2025	**In control:**	Committee on Finance and Law
On agenda:	6/24/2025	**Final action:**	7/8/2025
Enactment date:	7/8/2025	**Enactment #:**	17
Effective date:	7/9/2025		
Title:	Ordinance supplementing the Pittsburgh Code, Title 6: Conduct, Article 1: Regulated Rights and Actions by adding a new section 629 providing for the assessment of a civil fine for engaging in sex work in the City of Pittsburgh.		
Sponsors:	Barbara Warwick, R. Daniel Lavelle, Erika Strassburger, Deborah L. Gross, Khari Mosley		
Indexes:	PGH. CODE ORDINANCES TITLE 06 - CONDUCT		
Code sections:			
Attachments:			

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
7/9/2025	1	Mayor	Signed by the Mayor	
7/8/2025	1	City Council	Passed Finally	Pass
7/2/2025	1	Standing Committees	Affirmatively Recommended	Pass
6/24/2025	1	City Council	Read and referred	

Ordinance supplementing the Pittsburgh Code, Title 6: Conduct, Article 1: Regulated Rights and Actions by adding a new section 629 providing for the assessment of a civil fine for engaging in sex work in the City of Pittsburgh.

WHEREAS, between 2016 and 2022, only 3% of the City's arrests for prostitution concerned incidents of violence, sex trafficking, or the victimization of minors, suggesting that the majority of arrests are related to consensual exchanges between adults; and,

WHEREAS, during the same years, 67% of people arrested for prostitution were providers (sex workers) rather than third parties or clients; and,

WHEREAS, in Pittsburgh, clients ("Johns") routinely find their cases resolved with a summary offense at the preliminary hearing level, while providers routinely face penalties that include criminal conviction, incarceration, fines, parole, and probation; and,

WHEREAS, said penalties result in permanent criminal records for providers which hinder future opportunities for employment, housing, custody, and other necessities; and,

WHEREAS, a disproportionate amount of people arrested for prostitution are non-white and non-men, suggesting that those who are already most vulnerable to race and gender-based violence are most likely to be the ones most affected by criminal penalties for sex work and their related impacts; and,

WHEREAS, criminal penalties do not end or reduce sex work, but instead push providers into an illicit market

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where they are unprotected from exploitation and abuse; and,

WHEREAS, reducing penalties for sex work allows for improved health outcomes, as sex workers are more empowered to report crimes or seek social and medical services without fear of their own persecution; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Pittsburgh Police have limited resources which should be focused on violent crime, not arresting people for victimless crimes; and

WHEREAS, the additional expenditures of jail, prosecution, and probation after the arrest place a significant burden on taxpayers and the criminal justice system; and,

WHEREAS, reducing penalties from a misdemeanor to a summary offense relieves sex workers from life-disrupting penalties and reduces public resources spent on arrests, incarceration, and court proceedings, thus allowing our public resources to be focused on victims and survivors of coercive or violent situations.

The Council of the City of Pittsburgh hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. The Pittsburgh Code, Title 6: Conduct, Article 1: Regulated Rights and Actions, is hereby supplemented to add a new Section 629 Prostitution, as follows:

Section 629 - Prostitution

629.01 Definitions

a. "Prostitution" - an activity where a person engages in sexual activity as a business

b. "Sexual Activity" - includes sexual intercourse and deviate sexual intercourse, as those terms are defined in 18 Pa.C.S. §3101 (relating to definitions), and any touching on the sexual or other intimate parts of an individual for the purpose of gratifying sexual desire of either person.

629.02 Engaging in Prostitution

a. So long as Prostitution remains illegal pursuant to 18 Pa.C.S. §5902 no person may engage in prostitution within the jurisdiction limits of the City of Pittsburgh. If Prostitution is no longer illegal pursuant to 18 PaC.S. §5902, then this Section no longer applies.

b. Engaging in prostitution shall be a summary violation of this Section.

c. Persons found in violation of this Section shall be issued a Notice of Violation by the police or other authorized law enforcement officer. Alternatively, the officer can obtain the violator's name and address and later send a Notice of Violation by first-class mail.

d. Penalties - a penalty for a violation of this Section shall not exceed $100.00. The Court, in its discretion, may authorize Community Service, not to exceed 20 hours, in lieu of a fine. Penalties shall not be levied in addition to, nor exceed any penalties for prostitution assessed by any Pa state statutes.

e. Enforcement.

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i. A Notice of Violation issued under this Section shall be enforced in accordance with the procedures established by the City of Pittsburgh Police Department for the enforcement of summary violations.

ii. This Section shall not be construed to supersede any existing Pennsylvania or Federal law. Law enforcement retains the authority to enforce any and all applicable state law.