



SHOWING UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

June 1, 2021

Dear Members of Toronto City Council Executive Committee,

Re: EX24.11 Recommendations to Consult and Amend Bill 251, Combating Human Trafficking Act

This letter is written behalf of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Toronto, a local chapter of an international organization committed to undermining white support for white supremacist systems and institutions. We work in support of and collaborate with local and national racial justice and decolonization grassroots organizing led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour organizers.

SURJ represents a body of Toronto residents who are deeply concerned about the dangerous and violent implications inherent in Ontario's Bill 251, *Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021*. We urge members of the Executive Committee to accept the motion put forward by Councillor Wong-Tam; denounce Bill 251 and call on the Provincial Government to terminate the Bill.

Bill 251 will undoubtedly fail to deliver on its stated objectives to address issues of exploitation and trafficking. By increasing police powers, Bill 251 will instead lead to enhanced surveillance and criminalization of all Black, Indigenous, and racialized residents of Toronto, with especially detrimental effects on racialized migrant sex workers who already experience disproportionate targeting and harassment from law enforcement.

Bill 251 is anti-sex work, anti-migrant and racist; narratives of human trafficking are shaped by racist stereotypes and the conflation of human trafficking with consensual sex work. There is a long history of anti-trafficking rhetoric being used to drive moralistic agendas and fuel the expansion of policing, border control, and by-law enforcement under the guise of a violence against women and children mandate. We urge Members of Toronto City Council to listen to community and legal experts on the ground whose message is clear and consistent: that policing does not protect those who are experiencing marginalization and exploitation but results in greater harm, and that what is needed is sex worker, migrant, and labour rights.

Residents of Toronto have been especially loud throughout this past year in demanding that the City take action to defund the police. Bill 251 will not only disregard these growing calls for divestment from policing, but expand police powers and utilize municipal resources to surveil, interrogate, and harass Asian, Black, Indigenous, and migrant communities. The risk to safety for already vulnerable communities will come with enormous ripple effects and create additional barriers to essential health and social supports. We urge you to listen to the voices of those most affected by these decisions. If Bill 251 is passed, we demand that Toronto City Council refuse to participate in and block human trafficking inspections.

Thank you,

Brianna Greaves & Renee Dumaesque
Showing Up for Racial Justice Toronto (SURJ TO)