

## **City Council Hearing | Removing Responsibilities from the NYPD**

Good morning to all the city council and community members who are present in today's hearing. My name is Veronica, and I'm a member of the Trans Immigrant Project at Make the Road New York. I am originally from Puebla Mexico, but I have been in the United States for over 25 years.

Today's hearing on Removing Responsibilities from the NYPD is particularly important to me because of my experiences with the police. I am a trafficking survivor, and I am here to attest that my experiences with the vice units were outraging and traumatizing. The night that I was arrested, there were several male officers that put their hands on me, who laughed at my gender identity, and who didn't even see my humanity. Never through that arrest did anybody care to ask why I was trading sex in that moment, or how I was feeling. The arrest was completely dehumanizing, and then the judicial process that followed was even more terrorizing.

The case lasted over a year and a half where I had to constantly interact with the police and the judge, and had to revive very difficult memories over and over again. I also had to deal with the constant pressure from the police and the judge to admit guilty to being a sex worker, even though in that moment I was being trafficked. Because of the arrest and the court process I had a criminal record and a barrier to access employment and securing housing. During this time because of finances I had to move in with my family where I had to cut my hair, dress and act like man to be have place to stay.

This whole experience was very traumatic for me, even until this day I am terrified to see a police officer near me, I start shaking and get very nervous. What I needed at that moment was community services, and access to a social worker who could support for me. I needed someone to listen to me and a voucher for permanent housing, not police officers laughing at me.

I know this is the case for many more transgender women who like myself have experienced the abuse and violence from the vice units, and in general the NYPD. I am testifying as someone who survived trafficking, and also someone who was a sex worker, and I demand that we dismantle the vice units, so that people who have survived sex trafficking, people who are sex workers and people who are perceived as sex workers are not further victimized and traumatized by the police.

Thank you