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### **Sex Workers Project Statement on Rentboy Raids**

**New York, NY** – In response to the August 25<sup>th</sup> Homeland Security and NYPD raids on the offices of Rentboy.com, the Sex Workers Project of the Urban Justice Center released the following statement:

“After 18 years of operation as a platform for individuals to meet their resource needs and as an educational hub for its users, Rentboy.com was raided and seven employees were arrested. This action is a gross misuse of law enforcement time and funding that will cause harm to vulnerable communities.

Third party advertising platforms like Rentboy.com can increase safety and decrease vulnerability for those who turn to escorting in order to meet their needs. The ability to screen potential escort clients and build community is essential to the health and safety of those who engage in informal economies. Efforts to criminalize third party advertising platforms jeopardize the safety of marginalized communities.

We have always applauded the efforts of Rentboy.com to support the individuals using their website, including their recent announcement of a college fund for those seeking educational opportunities. Not only do they operate a platform that allows many to meet their economic needs, but they also support a community that is often ignored and stigmatized.

Law enforcement actions should be victim-centered, and focus on intervening when people seek out support and intervention. We are deeply appreciative of our law enforcement partners who prioritize the needs of victims and investigate crimes against sex workers. Unfortunately, many of the law enforcement units who do this important work to support victims are under-resourced and lack the capacity to investigate when people in the sex trade are at risk, or have been exploited or assaulted.

The raid on Rentboy.com is an unfortunate misallocation of resources, which will only compound the hesitation that many people in the sex trade have around reporting victimization and seeking help. This operation will also make it harder for people to support themselves. The communities who are often most targeted by violence and stigma are further disenfranchised and targeted by these actions.”