

Urban Justice Center

Sex Workers' rights and Human Trafficking

<https://www.urbanjustice.org/2021/08/20/utah-politicians-applaud-onlyfans-ban-of-sexually-explicit-content-but-questions-remain/>

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SALT LAKE CITY OnlyFans will start banning sexually explicit videos the majority of the videos currently on the app starting Oct. 1, and at least two Utah politicians applaud the decision.

The content subscription service announced in a statement on Thursday that it will "prohibit the posting of any content containing sexually explicit conduct" in order to comply with new rules from payment processors.

After accusations of child pornography, rape and revenge porn came out against Pornhub, Mastercard and Visa cut ties with that company and are taking steps to help decrease sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. Their new rules would require OnlyFans to review all content before publication and verify every user and performer in every video, including livestream.

"Creators will continue to be allowed to post content containing nudity as long as it is consistent with our Acceptable Use Policy," the statement from OnlyFans said. The policy prohibits videos involving minors or other illegal content, but it does not specify how this new ban will function in the future. More details from the content subscription service, based in London, are expected in the coming days.

Utah politicians weighed in on the issue, supporting the decision.

"We have a responsibility to protect our children from platforms that promote unsafe online environments and child exploitation," Utah Rep. Burgess Owens said.

Owens [recently joined more than 100 House Republicans and Democrats](#) in urging the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate the platform for allegedly being a "major marketplace" for child pornography.

Sen. Todd Weiler, R-Woods Cross, sponsor of a 2016 resolution that passed the state Legislature declaring pornography a public health crisis in Utah, says that, while he doesn't want to ban pornography altogether, he does "welcome changes in the private sector that will help protect children from sexually explicit material."

Content creators and sex workers use OnlyFans to charge fans a subscription fee in order to view "not safe for work" material. While there are videos featuring cooking, fitness and training, music and celebrities like Cardi B and Bella Thorne, sexual "adult" videos comprise most of the content on the platform.

The app, originally founded in 2016, experienced a boom in business during the COVID-19 pandemic when people were in lockdown at home and sex workers struggled to safely make a living without risking their health.

According to an Axios report, the company generated net revenue of \$375 million in 2020 and expects to reach \$1.2 billion in revenues this year. Top performers make between \$50,000 and \$1 million per year.

Sex workers, already hit hard by the pandemic, see this latest decision as another financial blow that may force them into potential poverty, homelessness and riskier forms of sex work and unsafe online spaces, the Black Sex Workers of Colorado said in a statement about the OnlyFans ban.

A local antipornography nonprofit says that by still allowing nudity and not defining which sexually explicit content will be banned, OnlyFans will continue exploiting the vulnerable.

"Whether they lose their source of income entirely, whether they are coerced into creating more extreme content, or whether they are pushed to more dangerous avenues of the sex industry, sites like OnlyFans continue to make money off of the exploitation of vulnerable people," according to [an article by Fight the New Drug](#), which opposes the pornography industry.

In 2018, former President Donald Trump signed a set of controversial bills into law that were intended to stop sex trafficking on online platforms. The Senate bill, the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act and a House bill, the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, also removed

some harm reduction and protection for sex workers.

"This is yet another attack on sex workers which will undoubtedly increase the violence we face and create more dangerous situations online and out in the world," continued the statement from the Black Sex Workers of Colorado. "The controversial SESTA/FOSTA bills have been successful in de-platforming sex workers across many platforms."

In a statement Friday, Harper Zacharias, director of development of the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center said the move by OnlyFans "indicates a troubling willingness of OnlyFans to bend under the slightest pressure of financial institutions. OnlyFans has made its fortune off of the backs of sex workers during a time of global crisis."

OnlyFans has yet to announce further details of what the app will become now that its primary source of content will be removed, but the company says that it will release more information in the next few days.