



## **Pennsylvania House Bill H.B. 135 Sample Support Letter**

### **Sample Subject:**

Prohibit Female Genital Mutilation: Pass Pennsylvania House Bill H.B. 135

### **Sample Text:**

I am writing to urge you to pass Pennsylvania House Bill H.B. 135. This bill sends an important message that female genital mutilation is a serious crime and will not be tolerated in Pennsylvania.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is any procedure involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs and is often performed on girls between the ages of 4 and 14 to ensure their virginity until marriage. FGM has significant and lasting medical consequences for victims. Immediately following the procedure, girls are at risk for severe pain, shock, bleeding, bacterial infection, and injury to nearby tissue. In the long term, girls and women who have suffered this procedure are at risk for recurrent bladder and urinary tract infections, cysts, infertility, and complications during intercourse and childbirth.

The threat of female genital mutilation is a reality for a significant number of girls in the United States. While many think of this as a custom that only occurs in foreign countries, research conducted by the African Women's Health Center of the Brigham and Women's Hospital found in 2010 that approximately 228,000 women and girls in the U.S. had either been subjected to female genital mutilation or were at risk. We believe this number is significantly higher today.

Currently, only 24 states and the federal government have enacted laws prohibiting FGM – our state has not. Enacting such a law in Pennsylvania would have a significant deterrent effect and would send a strong message that this conduct is not acceptable in our state.

I therefore urge you to pass Pennsylvania House Bill H.B. 135 and impose appropriate punishment on those who violate the human rights of girls in this way.