



## Minnesota FGM Legislation Sample Support Letter

### Sample Subject:

Prohibit Female Genital Mutilation: Pass Minnesota House Bill HF 2621 to Strengthen FGM Legislation in Minnesota

### Sample Text:

I am writing to urge you to pass Minnesota House Bill HF 2621 which would strengthen female genital mutilation (FGM) legislation in the state by making it a crime for a parent or guardian to consent to or knowingly allow their daughter to undergo FGM. It would further protect children in Minnesota by allowing for peace officers to remove a child from the home if they are found to be at risk of or have undergone FGM. Social services would then take immediate action, including an assessment of the risk to any other children within the family. In enacting this legislation, we send an important message that female genital mutilation is a serious crime and will not be tolerated in Minnesota.

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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found in 2016 that approximately 513,000 women and girls in the U.S. had either been subjected to female genital mutilation or were at risk. More than 44,000 women and girls are at risk in the state of Minnesota alone, making it 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for highest numbers of at-risk females.

Enacting such a law in Minnesota 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 legislation that would criminalize consenting to or knowingly allowing FGM on a minor in Minnesota and impose appropriate punishment on those who violate the human rights of girls in this way.