



## **Pennsylvania House Bill 413 Sample Support Letter**

### **Sample Subject:**

Prohibit Female Genital Mutilation: Pass Pennsylvania House Bill 413

### **Sample Text:**

I am writing to urge you to pass the Pennsylvania House Bill 413. 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. This dangerous procedure has no health benefits and has lifelong health and psychological consequences. 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. In Pennsylvania alone, 19,480 women and girls are at risk, making it among the top states with those at risk who are not protected by state legislation.

Currently, only 26 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 HB 413 and impose appropriate punishment on those who violate the human rights of girls in this way.