



## **New Jersey Senate Bill 427 Sample Support Letter**

### **Sample Subject:**

Protect Against Child Marriage: Pass NJ Senate Bill 427

### **Sample Text:**

I am writing to urge you to pass New Jersey Senate Bill 427. SB427 eliminates exceptions to the marriage age, and reserves marriage, a serious legal contract, for those who have reached the age of majority.

While the current minimum marriage age in New Jersey is 18, the state allows for two major exceptions: 1) children ages 16 and 17 can marry with parental consent, and 2) children aged 15 or younger can marry with judicial approval. There is currently no minimum age below which a judge can no longer approve a marriage, nor are there any criteria that a marriage involving a minor below the age of 15 must meet to be eligible for judicial approval. In cases in which minors over the age of 15 request a marriage license, there is no mechanism in place to ensure that the required parental consent is not in fact parental coercion.

The threat of child and forced marriage is a reality for a significant number of New Jersey residents. Research conducted by Unchained At Last indicates that between 1995 and 2012, 3,498 children were married in New Jersey. Of these children, 177 were between ages 12 and 15, and 91 percent of the children were married to adults, often at ages or with age differences that are considered statutory rape.

Child marriage severely limits opportunities to health, education and economic freedom. It also increases risk of domestic violence.

I therefore urge you to pass New Jersey Senate Bill 427 and develop mechanisms to ensure that all residents of this state are protected from the possibility of this violation of fundamental human rights.

**Tips:**

Feel free to personalize this letter. Know someone impacted by forced or child marriage? Make sure to let your legislators know. Are you a resident who plans factor this issue into your vote? Make sure to communicate that.