

**Supporting Senate Bill 34 Sample Support Letter**

**Subject:** Support S34, Ending child marriage in South Carolina

**Sample Text:**

I am writing to urge you to support S34, the bill introduced by Senator Brad Hutto that  would end all child marriage in South Carolina, without exception. Currently, the marriage age in South Carolina is 18; however the law includes a dangerous exception that allows 16- and 17-year-olds to be entered into marriage with parental “consent.” S34 eliminates this dangerous loophole and reserves marriage, a serious legal contract, for those who have attained the age of 18 and the full rights of adulthood.

The legislature took a step in the right direction in 2019 by eliminating the loophole in the law under which children of any age could marry if they were pregnant or had a baby. However, minors in South Carolina remain at risk.  Minors can easily be forced to marry, due to their limited legal capacity and resources, and there is no way to ensure that the required parental consent is not in fact parental coercion. In fact, when minors are forced to marry the perpetrators are often the minors’ parents. Further, most minors who have been entered into marriage in South Carolina have been 16- and  17-year-olds, so the change in the law did nothing to protect the majority of minors.

Child marriage also severely jeopardizes outcomes in health, education, and economic freedom. It also increases the risk of domestic violence. I therefore urge you to support S34, and protect all minors from child marriage in South Carolina. The longer we wait, the more minors we put at risk.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,