

**Supporting House Bill 148 Sample Support Letter**

**Subject:** Support HB148, Ending Child Marriage in Vermont

**Sample Text:**

I am writing to urge you to pass HB148, the bill that would end all child marriage in Vermont, without exception, out of the House Committee on Judiciary. Currently, the marriage age in Vermont is 18; however the law includes a dangerous loophole that allows parents to enter their 16- and 17-year-old minor children into marriage, by simply signing a form without the child’s input. H148 eliminates this harmful loophole.

Data collected from the Vermont Department of Health by the nonprofit Unchained At Last showbetween 2000 and 2022, 298 minors, two as young as 15, were married in Vermont. Of these minors, 80 percent were girls wed to adult men, and unfortunately many more remain at risk under the current law.

Minors, having not yet reached the age of majority, can easily be forced into marriage or trapped in an abusive marriage in which they are forced to stay. Because they have not yet reached the legal age of majority, minors face significant legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home, enter a domestic violence shelter, retain an attorney, or file a legal action. Minors being coerced into marriage may fear familial violence should they refuse to comply, or they may be physically or emotionally manipulated into an unwanted marriage.

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 pass HB148 out of committee, and stop subjecting the minors of Vermont to the abuse and exploitation of child marriage. The longer we wait, the more children we put at risk.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,