

**Supporting House Bill 2046 Sample Support Letter**

**Subject:** Support HB2046, Ending child marriage in Kansas

**Sample Text:**

I am writing to urge you to pass HB2046, the bill that would end all child marriage in Kansas, without exception, out of the House Committee on Federal and State Affairs. Currently, the marriage age in Kansas is 18; however the law includes dangerous loopholes that allow 16 and 17-year-olds to be entered into marriage with parental “consent”, and 15-year-olds to be entered into marriage with judicial approval. HB2046 eliminates these dangerous loopholes and reserves marriage, a serious legal contract, for those who have attained the age of 18 and the full rights of adulthood.

Data from the *Kansas Department of Health and Environment* retrieved by the nonprofit Unchained At Last shows 3,101 minors were entered into marriage in Kansas between 2000 and 2020. Out of these minors, at least 67% were girls married to adult men, and, unfortunately, many more remain at risk under current laws.

Before minors reach the legal age of adulthood they can easily be forced to marry, due to their limited legal capacity. They face legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home, enter a domestic violence shelter, retain an attorney, or file a legal action. Further, there is no way to ensure that the required parental “consent” is not, in reality, parental coercion. In fact, when minors are forced to marry the perpetrators are often the minors’ parents. There is also no judicial mechanism that can ensure a minor is not being forced to marry. Minors facing forced marriage may fear familial retribution or violence should they not comply, causing them to not alert the court.

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 HB2046, to protect minors from the abuse and exploitation of child marriage in Kansas. The longer we wait, the more minors we put at risk.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,