



TESTIMONY FOR SB0907 – Public Health – Female Genital Mutilation – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Senator Sara Love

Committee: Finance

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0907 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to ensure that state policy protects people’s lives, health, and dignity, especially the safety and well-being of children who rely on trusted adults and institutions for protection.

SB0907 strengthens that commitment by establishing clear, consistent, and enforceable statewide standards to prevent, identify, and respond to female genital mutilation (FGM), a severe and deeply harmful form of child abuse.

This bill makes several critical updates to Maryland law. It alters the definition of “abuse” to explicitly include FGM for mandatory reporting requirements, ensuring that healthcare providers, educators, and other mandated reporters clearly understand their obligation to report suspected cases. It expands and clarifies the actions related to FGM that are prohibited, and increases penalties for violations, reflecting the seriousness of the harm inflicted on children. SB0907 also requires a health occupations licensing board to revoke the license of any individual who commits a violation under the bill, ensuring accountability for professionals who abuse their authority.

Importantly, the bill authorizes individuals subjected to FGM to bring a civil action for damages, including attorney’s fees, creating a pathway for survivors to seek justice and long-term support. It further requires the Maryland Department of Health, in collaboration with public and private partners, to develop and distribute educational materials on FGM to support prevention and community awareness efforts statewide.

These protections are urgently needed.

FGM is a human rights violation that inflicts lifelong physical, psychological, and reproductive harm. Children subjected to FGM face increased risks of infection, chronic pain, complications in childbirth, trauma, and long-term health consequences. Maryland’s

current statutory language does not fully capture the scope of this harm or provide the clarity needed for consistent reporting and enforcement. SB0907 closes those gaps by ensuring that:

- FGM is clearly recognized as child abuse under Maryland law.
- Mandatory reporters understand their obligation to report suspected cases.
- Prohibited actions related to FGM are clearly defined and strengthened.
- Penalties and professional consequences reflect the severity of the harm.
- Survivors have access to civil remedies and long-term support.
- State agencies engage in proactive education and prevention efforts.

These measures create a uniform, evidence-based framework for prevention, reporting, and accountability.

SB0907 also has significant implications for children’s health and access to care. Survivors of FGM often require specialized medical treatment, trauma-informed behavioral health services, and long-term reproductive healthcare. By ensuring earlier identification and mandatory reporting, this bill helps connect children to critical medical and mental health services that can mitigate long-term harm. Strengthening prohibitions also prevents future cases, protecting children from avoidable and lifelong health consequences.

SB0907 aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens child protection, promotes transparency, and ensures that Maryland’s laws uphold the highest standards of safety and dignity. No child should ever be subjected to female genital mutilation, nor should any case go unreported, unaddressed, or unaccounted for.

We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0907.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Gorski
Executive Committee
Maryland Legislative Coalition