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March 10 2026

SB 0907- FAV

Public Health - Female Genital Mutilation

Dear Chair [Senator Pamela Beidle](#), Vice Chair [Antonio Hayes](#), and Members of the Finance Committee,

More than 230 million girls and women alive today have undergone female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation (FGM) in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. FGM/C, which should not be conflated with male circumcision, is mostly carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15. Treatment of the health complications of FGM/C is estimated to cost health systems US\$ 1.4 billion per year, a number expected to rise unless urgent action is taken towards its abandonment. Federal law makes it a crime to perform FGM/C on a girl younger than 18 or to take or attempt to take a girl out of the United States for FGM/C.

FGM/C has no health benefits, and it harms girls and women in many ways. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue, and it interferes with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies. Although all forms of FGM/C are associated with increased risk of health complications, the risk is greater with more severe forms of FGM/C. According to WHO, immediate complications of FGM/C can include: Severe pain, excessive bleeding (haemorrhage), genital tissue swelling, fever, infections e.g., tetanus, urinary problems, wound healing problems, injury to surrounding genital tissue, shock, death. Long-term complications can include: Urinary problems (painful urination, urinary tract infections), vaginal problems (discharge,

itching, bacterial vaginosis and other infections), menstrual problems (painful menstruations, difficulty in passing menstrual blood, etc.), scar tissue and keloid, sexual problems (pain during intercourse, decreased satisfaction, etc.), increased risk of childbirth complications (difficult delivery, excessive bleeding, caesarean section, need to resuscitate the baby, etc.) and newborn deaths, need for later surgeries: women with Type 3 might require deinfibulation (opening the infibulated scar to allow for sexual intercourse and childbirth, psychological problems (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, etc.).

It is not a defense of female genital mutilation that the conduct described in this bill is required as a matter of religion, custom, ritual or standard practice, or that the individual on whom it is performed or the individual's parent or guardian consented to the procedure. Given the ongoing misguided efforts to automatically grant top priority to any claims that are rooted to some extent in religious beliefs, regardless of the negative impact on the health and welfare of individuals and society, it would better if this bill included a statement that there is to be no religious belief veto over the application of this law.

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