

**SB 907/HB 1389:** Public Health - Female Genital Mutilation: Please vote to **SUPPORT** this bill.

Dear Finance Committee and Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **SUPPORT SB 907/HB 1389** during committee consideration or floor votes.

These bills strengthen Maryland's laws against female genital mutilation (FGM) by:

- Expanding the definition of prohibited acts to clearly include knowingly taking a minor out of state for the purpose of FGM ("vacation cutting").
- Increasing penalties for violators, including felony classification in certain cases.
- Requiring health care providers to report suspected FGM cases involving minors.
- Mandating additional training for health professionals, law enforcement, and child welfare workers on recognizing and responding to FGM.
- Directing the Maryland Department of Health to develop public awareness and prevention materials.

**Female genital mutilation is a form of child abuse and gender-based violence that causes lifelong physical and psychological harm. It has no medical benefit and is internationally recognized as a human rights violation.** Maryland already criminalizes performing FGM, but gaps remain—especially regarding taking children out of state for the procedure and ensuring professionals are trained to identify and report cases. These bills close those gaps, strengthen protections for vulnerable girls, and align Maryland with stronger federal and international standards.

**No cultural, religious, or personal belief justifies mutilating a child's body. We must send a clear message that Maryland will not tolerate FGM in any form and will protect girls from this harmful practice.**

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote in favor of SB 907/HB 1389** and help strengthen protections against female genital mutilation in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this critical child protection and public health issue.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals

