



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

March 10, 2026

The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
101 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

### **RE: House Bill 1389 – Public Health - Female Genital Mutilation – Letter of Support with Amendments**

Dear Chair Bartlett and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for house bill (HB) 1389 – Public Health - Female Genital Mutilation. HB 1389 would alter the definition of female genital mutilation (FGM); prohibit the transfer of children out of state for FGM; increase and establish penalties for violations of certain FGM provisions; allow victims of FGM to seek civil action; require the Department to report information about FGM cases in the state; and require the Department to develop and publish educational materials regarding FGM.

The Department supports this bill that strengthens protections against FGM, safeguards bodily autonomy, and advances reproductive justice for individuals in Maryland. This bill aligns with the state's Women's Health Action Plan goal of protecting reproductive rights. Female genital mutilation is the removal of or injury to the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.<sup>1</sup> FGM has no health benefits and carries a high risk of health complications and, in some cases, death.<sup>1</sup> FGM is almost always carried out on minors, violating their bodily autonomy and human rights before they are able to provide meaningful consent.

In Maryland, an estimated 25,000 individuals have experienced FGM, and more than 1,000 children are estimated to be at risk of FGM.<sup>2</sup> In some cases, “vacation cutting” occurs when children are taken out of the country to have FGM performed.<sup>3</sup> FGM and transporting individuals out of the country to perform FGM are both illegal in the United States.<sup>4</sup> This bill strengthens

---

<sup>1</sup> Female genital mutilation (2025). WHO.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

<sup>2</sup> AHA Foundation Study Findings on Female Genital Mutilation in the U.S.: Maryland (2023). AHA Foundation.

[https://www.theahafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/State-Pages\\_MD.pdf](https://www.theahafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/State-Pages_MD.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Global efforts to end female genital mutilation undermined by ‘vacation cutting’ (2024). United Nations News.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/06/1151056>

<sup>4</sup> H.R.6100 - STOP FGM Act of 2020 (2021). United States Congress.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6100>

protections and penalties in Maryland, joining seven other states and D.C. who have similarly strengthened their anti-FGM legislation.<sup>5</sup>

The Department proposes that an agency or administration, rather than the Department, should be responsible for the annual report. The required reporting consists of law enforcement data, which would be more efficiently collected and reported by an entity with access to and familiarity with that information.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs at [meghan.lynch@maryland.gov](mailto:meghan.lynch@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Meena Seshamani', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D.  
Secretary of Health

---

<sup>5</sup> FGM legislation by State. AHA Foundation.  
<https://www.theahafoundation.org/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-in-the-us/fgm-legislation-by-state/>

AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 1389  
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 6, in line 16, strike beginning after “**2027,**” down through “**ADMINISTRATION,**” in line 17 and substitute, “**THE SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, IN CONSULTATION WITH**”.

*Rationale:*

The Department does not receive this data, so the amendment is suggesting the Department to be removed from this process.