

Testimony Before the Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Regarding HB1389: Public Health - Female Genital Mutilation Legislation

Date: March 6, 2026

Submitted by: Samman Masud, Community Engagement Coordinator, Sahiyo

Dear Chair Delegate Bartlett, Vice-Chair Delegate Davis, and esteemed members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Samman Masud, and I'm the Community Engagement Coordinator at Sahiyo, an organization that seeks to end female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) through community awareness, education and survivor support. I'm based in the DMV region and in my role at Sahiyo, I support both local and global community of activists and survivors of FGM/C by centering their lived experiences in advocacy work—whether that is through storytelling to build community education programs, engaging with healthcare providers to address gaps in medical and psychosocial services available to survivors, or working with advocates to advance FGM/C legislative efforts in their respective states.

My engagement with impacted communities on a day-to-day basis has allowed me to understand the gravity of the very real and detrimental impacts FGM/C has on women and girls. Considered a human rights violation, FGM/C has no health benefits, and instead it carries both immediate, short-term and long-term harmful physical and psychosocial consequences that range from complications related to sexual health, urinary and vaginal health, as well as risks during pregnancy and childbirth. The psychological and emotional toll of FGM/C also includes a host of issues that affect survivors throughout different periods in their lives. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that about 500,000 girls in the United States have undergone or at the risk of experiencing FGM/C. Relatedly, girls can undergo FGM/C while traveling outside of the U.S. These realities highlight the importance of strong legal protections and coordinated prevention efforts to safeguard girls and support survivors.

Based on my work with survivors and impacted communities, I strongly support HB 1389 - Public Health - Female Genital Mutilation because it strengthens Maryland's existing FGM/C law and ensures it remains aligned with current best practices to better protect girls. The legislation also helps support survivors by expanding access to specialized healthcare, counseling, and community-based services, while investing in prevention efforts that can reduce long-term health and financial costs associated with seeking care. Finally, a clear and updated law equips healthcare providers, educators, social workers, and law enforcement with the framework needed to identify, prevent, and respond to FGM/C effectively.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide my testimony in support of this important legislation. For additional information that may support this effort, I can be reached at samman@sahiyo.org.

Sincerely,
Samman Masud