



TESTIMONY FOR HB1389 – Public Health – Female Genital Mutilation – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Delegates D. Jones, Addison, Boafo, Feldmark, Foley, Forbes, Guzzone, Hill, Kaiser, Lehman, Lopez, McCaskill, Palakovich Carr, Phillips, Ruff, Shetty, Smith, Solomon, Spiegel, Stewart, Taveras, Terrasa, Toles, Watson, Wilkins, Williams, Wolek, Woods, and Ziegler

Committee: Judiciary

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 HB1389 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.

HB1389 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 updates Maryland law by explicitly defining FGM as “abuse” for mandatory reporting requirements. It also strengthens prohibitions on performing or facilitating FGM and increases penalties for violations. These changes ensure that Maryland’s legal framework reflects the seriousness of FGM and provides the tools necessary for early intervention, accountability, and survivor protection.

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. HB1389 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 reflect the severity of the harm inflicted on children.

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

HB1389 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.

HB1389 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 HB1389.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Gorski
Executive Committee
Maryland Legislative Coalition