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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

To: Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair

Delegate, Debra Davis, Vice Chair

Judiciary Committee.

The Maryland Women's Caucus proudly supports HB 1389 – Public Health – Female Genital Mutilation.

HB 1389 amends § 5-701 of the Family Law Article to explicitly include female genital mutilation (FGM) within the definition of child abuse. By doing so, the bill establishes clear mandatory reporting requirements for suspected abuse or neglect involving FGM, strengthening protections for girls who are at risk of being subjected to this harmful practice.

Female genital mutilation has no medical justification and involves the partial or total removal of, or injury to, the external female genitalia. While often rooted in cultural traditions that claim to promote purity, modesty, or marriageability, FGM is a practice that exists to control women's bodies and suppress female autonomy. It is internationally recognized as a human rights violation that disproportionately harms girls, often between infancy and adolescence.

The consequences of FGM are severe and lifelong. Physical harms include excessive bleeding, infection, urinary and menstrual complications, abnormal scarring, chronic pain, complications during childbirth, and pain during intercourse. The psychological impact can be equally devastating, including trauma, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and loss of trust in caregivers who consent to or facilitate the procedure. FGM offers no benefit to a child's health or well-being and causes irreversible harm.

HB 1389 also imposes criminal liability on medical professionals who perform FGM. The increasing medicalization of this practice—where licensed healthcare providers carry out the procedure—does not mitigate its harm or illegality. Regardless of who performs it, FGM remains a violation of medical ethics, human rights, and child welfare.

By explicitly defining FGM as abuse, HB 1389 ensures accountability for those who perform, facilitate, or consent to this practice and strengthens Maryland's commitment to protecting the health, rights, and dignity of girls.

For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 1389.