REGULAR CALENDAR

January 24, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The Majority of the Committee on Children and Family Law to which was referred HB 34-FN,

AN ACT relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen. Having considered the same, report the same with the following resolution: RESOLVED, that it is INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE.

Rep. Jodi Nelson

FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMITTEE

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

MAJORITY
COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee:	**Children and Family Law**
Bill Number:	**HB 34-FN**
Title:	**relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen.**
Date:	**January 24, 2023**
Consent Calendar:	**REGULAR**
Recommendation:	**INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE**

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The majority of the committee supports a motion of Inexpedient to Legislate for the following reasons: The number of minors marrying per year in New Hampshire is very minimal, zero in the past two years. The process in which minors can be granted permission to marry is a significant process, including consent of all parents, interviews and ultimately a decision by a judge. The minors are legally protected because in New Hampshire, the certificate of marriage provides evidence of a minor's emancipation.

Vote 8-7.

Rep. Jodi Nelson
FOR THE MAJORITY

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

REGULAR CALENDAR

Children and Family Law

HB 34-FN, relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen. **MAJORITY: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE. MINORITY: OUGHT TO PASS.**

Rep. Jodi Nelson for the **Majority** of Children and Family Law. The majority of the committee supports a motion of Inexpedient to Legislate for the following reasons: The number of minors marrying per year in New Hampshire is very minimal, zero in the past two years. The process in which minors can be granted permission to marry is a significant process, including consent of all parents, interviews and ultimately a decision by a judge. The minors are legally protected because in New Hampshire, the certificate of marriage provides evidence of a minor's emancipation. **Vote 8-7.**

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

REGULAR CALENDAR

January 24, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The Minority of the Committee on Children and Family Law to which was referred HB 34-FN,

AN ACT relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen. Having considered the same, and being unable to agree with the Majority, report with the recommendation that the bill OUGHT TO PASS.

Rep. Cassandra Levesque

FOR THE MINORITY OF THE COMMITTEE

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

MINORITY
COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee:	**Children and Family Law**
Bill Number:	**HB 34-FN**
Title:	**relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen.**
Date:	**January 24, 2023**
Consent Calendar:	**REGULAR**
Recommendation:	**OUGHT TO PASS**

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The minority of the committee sees the importance of this bill. This bill will allow New Hampshire to join other states in ending child marriage, protecting the children of New Hampshire, and allowing them to be children.

Rep. Cassandra Levesque
FOR THE MINORITY

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

REGULAR CALENDAR

Children and Family Law

HB 34-FN, relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen. **OUGHT TO PASS.**

Rep. Cassandra Levesque for the **Minority** of Children and Family Law. The minority of the committee sees the importance of this bill. This bill will allow New Hampshire to join other states in ending child marriage, protecting the children of New Hampshire, and allowing them to be children.

Original: House Clerk
Cc: Committee Bill File

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILY LAW

EXECUTIVE SESSION on HB 34-FN

BILL TITLE: relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen.

DATE: January 24, 2023

LOB ROOM: 206-208

MOTIONS: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE

Moved by Rep. J. Nelson Seconded by Rep. DeSimone Vote: 8-7

CONSENT CALENDAR: NO

Statement of Intent: Refer to Committee Report

Respectfully submitted,

Rep Peter Petrigno, Clerk

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE HOUSE CLERK

1/10/2023 7:58:02 AM
Roll Call Committee Registers Report

2023 SESSION

Children and Family Law

Bill #: HB 34-FN Motion: ITL AM #: — Exec Session Date: 1/27/23

Members	YEAS	Nays	NV
Pearson, Mark A. Chairman	✓		
Long, Patrick T. Vice Chairman		✓	
DeSimone, Debra L.	✓		
Bickford, David A.	✓		
Nelson, Jodi L	✓		
McMahon, Charles E.	✓		
Ball, Lorie	✓		
Panek, Sandra L	✓		
Seidel, Sheila C	✓		
Grossman, Gaby M.		✓	
Levesque, Cassandra N.		✓	
Petrigno, Peter Clerk		✓	
Perez, Maria			✓
Gregg, Alicia C		✓	
Moulton, Candace		✓	
Raymond, Heather		✓	
TOTAL VOTE:	8	7	

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE HOUSE CLERK

1/10/2023 7:58:02 AM
Roll Call Committee Registers Report

2023 SESSION

Children and Family Law

Bill #: HB34-FN **Motion:** OTP **AM #:** — **Exec Session Date:** 1/27/2023

Members	YEAS	Nays	NV
Pearson, Mark A. Chairman		✓	
Long, Patrick T. Vice Chairman	✓		
DeSimone, Debra L.		✓	
Bickford, David A.		✓	
Nelson, Jodi L		✓	
McMahon, Charles E.		✓	
Ball, Lorie		✓	
Panek, Sandra L		✓	
Seidel, Sheila C		✓	
Grossman, Gaby M.	✓		
Levesque, Cassandra N.	✓		
Petrigno, Peter Clerk	✓		
Perez, Maria			✓
Gregg, Alicia C	✓		
Moulton, Candace	✓		
Raymond, Heather	✓		
TOTAL VOTE:	7	8	1

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE HOUSE CLERK

1/10/2023 7:58:02 AM
Roll Call Committee Registers Report

2023 SESSION

Children and Family Law

Bill #: HB 34-FN **Motion:** ~~OTP/A~~ **AM #:** 2023-0049h **Exec Session Date:** 1/24/2023

Members	YEAS	Nays	NV
Pearson, Mark A. Chairman		✓	
Long, Patrick T. Vice Chairman	✓		
DeSimone, Debra L.		✓	
Bickford, David A.		✓	
Nelson, Jodi L		✓	
McMahon, Charles E.		✓	
Ball, Lorie		✓	
Panek, Sandra L		✓	
Seidel, Sheila C		✓	
Grossman, Gaby M.	✓		
Levesque, Cassandra N.	✓		
Petrigno, Peter Clerk	✓		
Perez, Maria			✓
Gregg, Alicia C	✓		
Moulton, Candace	✓		
Raymond, Heather	✓		
TOTAL VOTE:	7	8	1

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILY LAW

PUBLIC HEARING ON HB 34-FN

BILL TITLE: **relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen.**

DATE: **January 10, 2023**

LOB ROOM: **206** **Time Public Hearing Called to Order:** **2:28pm**

Time Adjourned: **3:45pm**

Committee Members: Reps. M. Pearson, Long, Petrigno, DeSimone, Bickford, J. Nelson, McMahon, Ball, Panek, Seidel, Grossman, Levesque, M. Perez, Gregg, Moulton and Raymond

Bill Sponsors:

Rep. Levesque	**Rep. Petrigno**	**Rep. Sofikitis**
Rep. Rung	**Rep. Meuse**	**Rep. Rombeau**
Rep. Toll	**Rep. Read**	**Rep. N. Murphy**
Sen. Watters	**Sen. Altschiller**	

TESTIMONY

* Use asterisk if written testimony and/or amendments are submitted.

***Rep. Levesque**
- Distributed testimony and data in support of bill
- * See written testimony
- Agreed that there is a difference in brain development between ages 16 and 18 year olds.

Rep. Ellen Read
- Spoke in favor of this bill
- Military insurance covers partners and children. Concerned parents can and do coerce children to marry.
- We have a discriminating law since same sex couples cannot marry until age 18.
- Expressed concern regarding human trafficking. Older spouse become guardian of spouse under 18 years old.

Rep. Rosemary Rung
- Spoke in support of bill
- Pointed out that if 16 and 17 year olds cannot enter marriage without parent consent, that shows they are not at an age as seen as able to make this decision.

***Sebastian Fuentes**
- Spoke in support of bill
- Pointed out that many employment situations are limited to 16 year olds, this leaves one to question how this person would support potential child.

Rep. Jess Edwards
- Spoke to oppose this bill
- Advocate of marriage, old bill:
  - Banned marriage up to age 18
  - Concerned about potential child born out of marriage
  - Self-determination is impacted when not allowed to marriage
  - Addressed military who want to marry - this helps the family unit

- State would have to accept out-of-state marriages
- Concern of increased: abortion, welfare, and running away to sanctuary states
- Need to see this as individual freedom issue for 16 and 17 year olds

***Emma Sevigny** - New Futures
- * See written testimony

***Rep. Nancy Murphy**
- Expressed support of bill. Credits her positive life on waiting for marriage to allow her to grow and mature.
- Spoke about development of prefrontal cortex of brain.

***Lynn Stanley -** NH NASW
- Spoke in support of bill
- Not about maturity, It's about legal rights, people do not receive until they are 18 including seeking shelter for domestic abuse.
- Concerned NY and MA passed age 18 law
- NH keeping 16 opens door for more trafficking
- Since taking wife over state line is legal, taking 16 year old over state line is illegal.
- *See Written testimony
- Agreed this could be a national security issue.

***Dana Albrecht**
- Not taking a position on the bill
- Presented both sides of issue
- Asked committee rhetorical questions

***Rep. Maria Perez**
- Spoke in favor of bill
- Shared personal information regarding her history of Domestic Violence while she was underage.
- Will bring up at Executive Council in a couple of weeks.

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Peter Petrigno, Clerk

House Remote Testify

Children and Family Law Committee Testify List for Bill HB34 on 2023-01-1

Support: 106 Oppose: 2 Neutral: 0 Total to Testify: 0

Export to Excel

Name	City, State Email Address	Title	Representing	Position	Testifying	Non-Germane
Bernstein, Martin	Portsmouth, NH martin.bernstein91@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	Yes
brown, Shamecca	Concord, NH, NH shameccab@ywcanh.org	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Webb, Kerry	Chattanooga, TN BVL234@mocs.utc.edu	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	Yes
Parent, Katie	Manchester, NH katieparent01@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Wagner, Michelle	Portsmouth, NH michelle@speakingupforchange.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
St Jacques, Taylor	Andover, NH tay.lc92@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Rondeau, Rebecca	Merrimack, NH rebecca.rondeau44@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Greenberg, Elizabeth	Derry, NH Lizgreenberg26@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Folsom, MSW, Andrea	Hopkinton, NH aahfolsom@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Raycraft, Donna	Concord, NH draycraft@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Wells, Katlyn	Brookline, NH katlyn.wells@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
LaFont-Leamey, Krista	Enfield, NH krista.lafontleamey@vrh.org	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Koenig, Katie	Weare, NH katie.maskowitz@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Pinard, Jane	Manchester, NH Jane.Pinard@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	children	Support	No	No
Twombly, Jane	Hampton, NH jane.twombly@outlook.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Renaud-Finnegan, Sheila	Pembroke, NH srfinn658@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Bradley, Adele	Goffstown, NH Adelevb@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Lombard, Susan	Epsom, NH sjll2009@hotmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
nutter-upham, frances	nashua, NH frannu@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Myself	Support	No	No
Anastasia, Patricia	Londonderry, NH patti.anastasia@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Grossi, Anne	Bedford, NH adgrossi7982@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Ropp, Elizabeth	Manchester, NH arunareiki@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No

Austin, Suzanne	Brentwood, NH suzanne321@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Smith, Julie	Nashua, NH cantdog@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No
Garland, Ann	LEBANON, NH annhgarland@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Izzo, Andrea	Bedford, NH Andie1114@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	No
Ayling, Rebecca	Manchester, NH beckystarr83@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Morgan, Meredith	Hanover, NH meredithm@kahres.org	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Durfee, Samantha	Contoocook, NH samanthaj.durfee@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Watters, Senator David	Dover, NH david.watters@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Support	No	No
Banach, Mary	Exeter, NH mbanach@unh.edu	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Hunt, Jason	Farmington, NH jhunt0417@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Swasey, Erin	Lebanon, NH erin.k.swasey@hitchcock.org	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
O'Neill, Faye	Amherst, NH nhfaye@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Goyette, Alex	Falls Church, VA alexg@tahirih.org	A Lobbyist	Myself	Support	No	No
Townsend, Charles	Canaan, NH chucktownsend@me.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Fay, Maura	Exeter, NH maurafay@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Babladelis, Ashley	Concord, NH ash.hatch@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Tasneem, Sara	El Sobrante, CA tasneemsf333@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	Yes
Brennan, Nancy	Weare, NH burningnan14@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Brennan, Arthur	Weare, NH arete201314@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Beverstock, Jillian	Stratham, NH beverstockjillian88@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Robinson, Sarah	Concord, NH sarah@granitestateprogress.org	A Lobbyist	Granite State Progress	Support	No	No
Reiss, Fraidy	Westfield, NJ admin@unchainedatlast.org	A Member of the Public	Unchained At Last	Support	No	No
Powell, Becca	Westfield, NJ Becca@unchainedatlast.org	A Member of the Public	Current and former legislators from DE, NJ, PA, MN, RI, NY and MA	Support	No	No
Thompson, Keith	Nashua, NH kthomp0909@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Covert, Susan	Contoocook, NH scovert@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Schmidt, Jan	Nashua, NH tesha4@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Sevigny, Emma	Epsom, NH esevigny@new-futures.org	A Lobbyist	New Futures	Support	No	No

Kahn-Fowler, Adelaide	Alexandria, VA akahn@protectourdefenders.com	A Member of the Public	Protect Our Defenders	Support	No	No
Schriedel, Justus	Portsmouth, NH justusschriedel@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Abramson, Quincy	Dover, NH quincyleah@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Reisman, Robert	Merrimack, NH Robertreisman2@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Sandler, Erin	Concord, NH ersandleremberley@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Hanash, Michele	Bethesda, MD michele@unchainedatlast.org	A Member of the Public	AHA Foundation	Support	No	No
Richman, Susan	Durham, NH susan7richman@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Grobecker, Joanne	Merrimack, NH mrs.grobecker@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Moccia, Lianne	LEBANON, NH lianne.moccia@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Kindeke, Grace	Manchester, NH gkindeke@afsc.org	A Lobbyist	American Friends Service Committee	Support	No	No
Locke, Sara	Merrimack, NH sara@vacationisms.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Martin, Ken	Merrimack, NH diyjilted@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Jobin, Jennifer	Merrimack, NH jenjobin@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Smith, Hayden	Hanover, NH hasmith1520@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Allen, Laurene	Merrimack, NH Alaurene@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Falk, Cheri	Wilton, NH falk.cj@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
McWilliams, Rebecca	Concord, NH Rebecca.McWilliams@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Merrimack 30	Support	No	No
Marabella, Bryan	Concord, NH bryanmarabella@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Nashashibi, Rima	Tustin, CA Rima@globalhope365.org	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Ingraham, Sheryl	Concord, NH sheryl.ingraham@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
House, Alice	Durham, NH ahouse2112@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Vogt, Robin	Portsmouth, NH Robin.Vogt@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Support	No	No
McDermott, Donna	Portsmouth, NH donna.mcdermott64@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Clark, Denise	Milford, NH denise.m.clark03055@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Sajeev, Narayan	Nashua, NH narayansajeev1@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Filiano, Emily	Barrington, NH emily.filiano@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Hinebauch, Mel	Concord, NH melhinebauch@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No

Ellermann, Maureen	Concord, NH ellermannf@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Istel, Claudia	Acworth, NH cistel79@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Gaudet, Fawn	Rumney, NH fawngaudet@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Fogarty, Maggie	Dover, NH mfogarty@afsc.org	A Lobbyist	American Friends Service Committee - NH Program	Support	No	No
Altschiler, Senator Debra	SD24, NH jennifer.horgan@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	SD24	Support	No	No
Ames, Sarah	Moultonborough, NH quarab58@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Zaenglein, Barbara	AMHERST, NH bzaenglein@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Desmarais, Doreen	Northwood, NH doreend@netzero.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Frost, Sherry	Dover, NH sherryfrost626@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Fortier-Dube, Brenda	Franconia, NH brendaleefd@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Thomas, Cindy	Merrimack, NH clsthomas@aol.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	Yes
anderson, robert	Concord, NH rgand43@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Spina, Cassandra	Sandown, NH cabreniser@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Phillips, Ellen	New Durham, NH ellenphillips1944@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Peguero, Jamila	Manchester, NH jamila.peguero@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Hackmann, Kent	Andover, NH hackmann@uidaho.edu	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Smith, Sae-Im	Hanover, NH sae.smith@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Hynes, Barbara	Concord, NH mrsbarbhynes@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Toll, Amanda Elizabeth	Keene, NH electamandanh@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Cheshire 15	Support	No	No
Herbert, Paula	Franconia, NH paulamark15@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Barber, Deshauna	Washington, DC president@servicewomen.org	A Member of the Public	Service Women's Action Network	Support	No	No
Meuse, David	Portsmouth, NH David.Meuse@leg.state.no.us	An Elected Official	Rockingham 37	Support	No	No
Howes, Debrah	Hudson, NH president@aft-nh.org	A Lobbyist	American Federation of Teachers-NH	Support	No	No
Liberman, Sheryl	Merrimack, NH saml54@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Cote, Lois	Manchester, NH lcote06@outlook.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Tyree, Dawn	Manning, OR Upondawnwriting@gmail.com	A Lobbyist	Myself	Support	No	No
Termini, Marcella	MANCHESTER, NH marcellatermini@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No

Kremer, Ben	Newmarket, NH bckremer1@sbcglobal.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Mack, Connor	Dover, NH cmacker1234@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Brown, Morgan	Littleton, NH mkb1242@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Warner, Kelly	Exeter, NH kellwarner@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No
Levesque, Patty	BARRINGTON, NH pntsmom99@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	No

Jane E. Twombly, MSW, LCSW
971 Ocean Blvd. #2
Hampton, NH 03842
jane.twombly@outlook.com
603-531-7613

January 6, 2023

Re: HB 34

As a social worker and member of the public, I am in favor of this bill. A minor child lacks the right to retain an attorney, should the minor choose to terminate the marriage. This is an issue of legal protection rather than a simple matter of maturity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jane E. Twombly, MSW, LCSW

TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER®

Protecting Immigrant Women and Girls Fleeing Violence

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 34 (Raising Age of Marriage to Eighteen)

Presented to the New Hampshire House of Representatives: Committee on Children and Family Law

January 10, 2023

Alex Goyette, Senior Public Policy Associate

Chair Pearson, Vice Chair Long, and Distinguished Committee Members:

The Tahirih Justice Center (Tahirih) is a national legal advocacy and direct services organization, founded in 1997, that has assisted over 25,000 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other abuses.

Tahirih has unique legal and policy expertise in forced and child marriage as U.S. problems. Through Tahirih's Forced Marriage Initiative, launched in 2011, we have worked on several hundred cases involving women and girls nationwide. Tahirih has also compiled extensive research on child marriage in the United States, including a 50-state statutory compilation, an in-depth report that compares and analyzes all states' minimum marriage age laws and exceptions, a compilation of stories from survivors' of child marriage in the United States, and a policy brief reflecting on progress made in the national movement to end child marriage since 2016. [i]

We submit this testimony in strong support of HB 34. This important measure would build on reforms undertaken in 2018, when a bill was signed into law raising New Hampshire's minimum marriage age to 16 and requiring 16- and 17-year-olds to obtain a judge's approve to be married.

Unfortunately, these reforms did not go far enough to protect New Hampshire's children. Among the other shortcomings, current law provides no court-appointed attorney to represent the minor's best interest and provide her objective advice about her rights and options. The lack of any procedural opportunity to disclose abuse safely and privately creates an incentive for minors to lie and say that they desire an unwanted marriage, simply to avoid the retribution they would face at home if they do not do so. Minors are also not emancipated until after a marriage has already occurred – too late to for the minor to prevent an unwanted marriage.

ATLANTA
230 Peachtree Street NW
Atlanta, GA 30303
Suite 1960
Tel: 470-481-4700
Fax: 470-481-7400
Atlanta@tahirih.org

BALTIMORE
211 E. Lombard Street
Suite 307
Baltimore, MD 21202
Tel: 410-999-1900
Fax: 410-630-7539
Baltimore@tahirih.org

GREATER DC | NATIONAL
6400 Arlington Boulevard
Suite 400
Falls Church, VA 22042
Tel: 571-282-6161
Fax: 571-282-6162
TTY: 711
GreaterDC@tahirih.org
Justice@tahirih.org

HOUSTON
1717 St. James Place
Suite 450
Houston, TX 77056
Tel: 713-496-0100
Fax: 713-481-1793
Houston@tahirih.org

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA
881 Sneath Lane
Suite 115
San Bruno, CA 94066
Tel: 650-270-2100
Fax: 650-466-0006
SFBayArea@tahirih.org

tahirih.org

HB 34 would take a simple but powerful step to protect New Hampshire's children, by making the legal minimum marriage age the same as the legal age of adulthood (age 18).[ii]

The reforms proposed by HB 34 will accomplish three critical commonsense objectives—preventing forced marriages of children; ensuring that both parties to a marriage are fully empowered to protect themselves from abuse; and preventing early marriages that put children at acute risk.

Forced marriages can happen in America for many reasons. They can arise in families and communities where parents expect to control the marriage choices of their children, and where marrying young is the norm. Some individuals are pushed to marry to prevent or address sex or pregnancy outside of marriage, or as a cover-up for rape or sexual abuse. Sometimes, an abusive dating partner will threaten or coerce an individual into marriage. In other cases, sexual predators can target, "groom," and then pressure vulnerable girls to marry them, in order to further isolate and control them and to have round-the-clock access to them without fear of prosecution. Children can also be compelled to marry when poor, abusive, or neglectful parents try to offload them on others. Some parents even seek to gain financially from such arrangements.

While both adults and children can face forced marriages, children are especially susceptible to coercion, and particularly disempowered to advocate for themselves because of their legal status as minors. Many "escape routes" that are wide open to adults are closed, or much more challenging to access, for minors.

Without being able to exercise self-help options minors must rely on systems-help, but are often reluctant to do so because of mandatory reporting laws on child abuse. They realize that disclosing abuse could set in motion serious consequences over which they would have no control, including that their parents could go to jail, or that they and their siblings could be put into foster care.

Even when minors do make a report, it may get them nowhere, or even make matters worse for them. In Tahirih's experience across the country, child protective services typically fails to investigate forced marriage allegations, considering it outside their mandate, or does not take appropriate action. This can subject a girl to retaliation for reaching out, causing her to rescind her appeal for help and making it more difficult for advocates to work with her as perpetrator monitors her more closely or may expedite the marriage.

In addition to addressing these concerns about forced marriages, HB 34 will ensure that both parties to genuine marriages will be on equal legal footing with each other, rather than leaving a minor party at such a harsh disadvantage in the relationship.

Of equal importance, the bill will also spare girls from the domino effects of marrying under age 18, which can dramatically heighten their vulnerability to abuse. Up to 80% of marriages involving someone under age 18 end in divorce, and teen mothers who marry and later divorce can be made worse-off long-term—more than twice as likely to live in future poverty—than teen mothers who do not marry.

Women who marry as teens are also more likely to have more children overall and to do so more quickly, to drop out of school, to have fewer work opportunities, and to wind up poor. They also experience more medical and mental health problems, both short- and long-term.[iii] All this can increase their dependence, and limit their options in the event of divorce or domestic violence.

In sum, there are significant child-protection concerns inherent to every child marriage. New Hampshire's current law on minimum marriage age does not do enough to prevent these harms.

There is a rapidly growing national movement to overhaul antiquated minimum marriage age laws that put children at risk. Since 2016, seven states have ended child marriage entirely: Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. The recent laws ending child marriage in nearby states are also of particular concern, as they may lead to an increase in "policy shopping" where children are brought to New Hampshire specifically for the purpose of child marriage.

Several other states also have pending bills that, like HB 34, would ban all marriage under age 18. New Hampshire should assert its place as a leader in this historic movement by taking swift action now to advance this bill.

We respectfully urge the Committee to <u>support</u> HB 34 to end child marriage in New Hampshire.

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[i] A full copy of Tahirih's 50-state report, along with other resources, is available at www.tahirih.org/childmarriagepolicy.

[ii] *See* N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 21-B:1 (defining 18 as the age of majority)

[iii] *See* specific statistics and sources cited in Tahirih Justice Center, "Child Marriage Poses Serious Risks to Children," *available at* www.tahirih.org/childmarriagepolicy.

January 9, 2023

Children and Family Law Committee Members:

My name is Sara Tasneem, and I am a survivor of forced child marriage. **I am providing testimony in strong support of: HB34-FM: relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen, in Massachusetts.**

I am a vocal national advocate to end forced child marriage in the United States because of the horrors that I had to endure as a child with absolutely no escape, legal or otherwise. I hope that no other child at any age must go through what I have. The dangerous loophole which minors to marry in the state of Massachusetts must be removed to protect minors who do not share the same rights as an adult. As such, these minors are in grave danger of becoming a victim of forced child marriage with no escape.

As many victims of forced child marriage, my father and legal guardian was the one who forced me to marry. At the age of fifteen, during a summer visit to see my dad, I was forced into a marriage I did not want. My father introduced me to my husband-to-be one morning and I was told I would marry him that night. That man was thirteen years my senior, he 28 years old and I was fifteen. My mother did not even know that this was taking place. After a spiritual wedding ceremony that evening, I was handed over to my new husband and left in his care. He became my guardian, husband, and the father to my children. I lost my childhood, my freedom, and myself that night. I would never be the same person again.

My perpetrator had full control over my life. I was not allowed to go back to school. Instead I was taken out of the country and impregnated almost immediately. At an age where all I had dreamed of was going to the Air Force and then law school, I was instead forced into a marriage and motherhood with a stranger almost twice my age. Six months after our spiritual ceremony I was ***legally*** married at the age of 16 and pregnant

My pregnant belly should have alerted authorities to a rape instead of a rubber stamp on a marriage certificate. I was not advised of my rights, or even asked if I wanted the marriage. None of it felt like a real marriage to me. It began to feel more and more like a prison after our legal marriage. My personal experience highlights the very real dangers that minors face when forced into a marriage. My perpetrators entrapped me in a marriage so that they could escape any legal repercussions of abuse. If my mom had known I was being married, she would have alerted the authorities to a statutory rape.

Marriage before the age of eighteen makes children more likely to be pulled out of school than their adult counterparts and three times more likely to suffer from abuse in their marriages. All of which was true for me. Marriage before the age or eighteen is a human rights abuse because of the many harms it causes to the minor.

As a minor, I faced extreme and numerous barriers to being able to leave my abusive marriage. It took me eight long years of surviving my abusive relationship and overcoming enormous obstacles to file for divorce. It then took three years to finalize my divorce. Sadly, I am not the exception.

It has taken me years to recognize and address the severe negative impacts child marriage has had on me, and my children. The long-term effects for me include PTSD and anxiety from the prolonged abuse, recovering from the financial, sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. The educational impact of being taken out of school at fifteen years old led directly to extreme poverty later in my adult life. It has taken me years to recover and I most likely will never catch up to my peers. Even though I am in therapy, will likely suffer from PTSD and anxiety most of my life.

There are ***so many*** reasons why child marriage is harmful to minors. Respectfully, I cannot think of one good reason why Massachusetts would want to continue to expose minors to these harms and a human rights abuse.

Sara Tasneem
Tasneemsf333@gmail.com
707-217-8925 cell
Survivor / Advocate

Written Testimony in Support of HB34: Ending Child Marriage
Presented to the New Hampshire House Committee on Children and Family Law | January 10, 2023

Chair Pearson, Vice Chair Long and distinguished committee members: Unchained At Last is the only organization dedicated to ending forced and child marriage in New Hampshire and across the United States through direct services and advocacy. **Unchained urges you to vote "YES" on HB34.**

The marriage age in New Hampshire is 18,[1] but the law includes a dangerous loophole: Children aged 16 or 17 may marry with parental consent and judicial approval.[2] This loophole became law in 2018 as a step in the right direction; previously, girls as young as 13 and boys as young as 14 were allowed to marry.

However, the loophole in the 2018 law still seriously endangers 16- and 17-year-olds:

- When a teen is forced to marry, the perpetrators are typically the parents. Parental "consent" is often parental "coercion."
- Before approving a minor's marriage, the judge must conclude that the marriage is in the minor's "best interest."[3] However, the U.S. State Department has called marriage before 18 a "human rights abuse,"[4] and a human rights abuse is never in the best interest of a minor.
- The judicial review process puts a child being forced to marry in the terrifying position of choosing between being honest with the court and facing repercussions at home, or lying to the court. Not one survivor with whom Unchained has worked chose to be honest with the court.
- Teens aged 16 and 17 are at the highest risk of child marriage: Some 96 percent of children married in New Hampshire between 2000 and 2021 were 16- and 17-year-olds.[5] They need more – not less – protection than other minors.

Further, marriage before 18, including at 16 or 17, produces devastating, lifelong repercussions:

- Minors can easily be forced into marriage or forced to stay in a marriage before they become legal adults at age 18. They face overwhelming legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home,[6] enter a shelter,[7] retain an attorney[8] or bring a legal action.[9]
- Child marriage destroys girls' health, education and economic opportunities, and increases risk of experiencing violence.[10]
- Those who marry before 18 have a 70 to 80 percent chance of getting divorced – and teen mothers who marry and then divorce are much more likely to end up in poverty than teen mothers who stay single.[11]

The statistics are alarming: 212 children as young as 14 were married in New Hampshire between 2000 and 2021. Some 93% were girls wed to adult men.[12]

HB34 eliminates the dangerous loophole that allows child marriage. Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts, American Samoa and the U.S. Virgin Islands already have passed laws to end all marriage before 18 without exceptions, and similar bills are pending in several other states. **Let's join them. It's time we finish the progress we started in 2017 and eliminate child marriage in New Hampshire.**

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[1] New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (N.H. R.S.A.) § 21:44.
[2] N.H. R.S.A. §§ 457:4; 457:6; 457:7.
[3] N.H. R.S.A. §§ 457:6; 457:7.
[4] U.S. Department of State, et al., *United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls* (March 2016), *available at* https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf.
[5] Based on Unchained's analysis of marriage-license data from the New Hampshire Division of Vital Records Administration.
[6] N.H. R.S.A. § 169-D:2.
[7] Sept. 13, 2017, telephone conversation with Christine LaCourse, office coordinator at N.H. Coalition Against Domestic Violence.
[8] Contracts with children for anything other than basic necessities such as food, water and shelter are voidable upon the child's disaffirmance after reaching the age of majority. *Porter v. Wilson,* 209 A.2d 730, 732 (N.H. 1965); *State v. Benoit*, 490 A.2d 295, 299 (N.H. 1985).
[9] N.H. R.S.A. § 498-A:23; N.H. R.S.A. § 463:3(I)-(II); *Peter L. v. Rollins*, No. 00-cv-129, 2001 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 21882, at 9 (D.N.H. Dec. 19, 2001).
[10] http://noceilings.org/report/highlights.pdf.
[11] http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2467&context=facpubs.
[12] Alissa Koski, et. al., Child Marriage or Statutory Rape?, Journal of Adolescent Health (March 2022). Data since 2018 based on Unchained's analysis of marriage-license data from the New Hampshire Division of Vital Records Administration.

Written Testimony in Support of HB34: Ending Child Marriage
Presented to the NH House Committee on Children and Family Law | January 10, 2023

Chair Pearson, Vice Chair Long and distinguished committee members:

We are a bipartisan group of state legislators who have partnered with the nonprofit group Unchained At Last to end child marriage in our seven states. We respectfully urge you, our fellow lawmakers, to do the same. End this archaic, sexist practice that destroys girls' lives – even if you get the pushback we got at first.

Marriage before age 18 creates a nightmarish legal trap, even for the most mature 17-year-olds. Minors face overwhelming legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home, enter a confidential shelter, retain an attorney or bring a legal action.

Further, marriage before 18 is recognized as a human rights abuse.[1] It destroys nearly every aspect of American girls' lives, including their health, education economic opportunities[2] and even their physical safety.[3]

You probably will get pushback when you try to pass the simple, commonsense legislation we introduced in our states, which eliminated the dangerous loopholes that allowed marriage before age 18. Do not compromise. Do not replace one loophole with another; insist on a marriage age of 18, without exceptions. There is no room for negotiation when you are ending a human rights abuse.

You will hear, as we did at first, from legislators and others whose grandmothers married at 14. Remind them that the world has changed since grandma was a kid.

You will hear arguments about young love. Respond by asking what harm comes to a young couple if they wait a matter of months to marry. Minors must wait until 18 to enter almost any other contract, regardless of how passionately they feel about it.

But what if a girl is pregnant, some will ask you. Let them know we would be harming, not helping, if we married off pregnant girls. Teen mothers in the U.S. who marry are more likely to suffer economic deprivation and instability than teen mothers who stay single.[4]

A teen mother who wants to co-parent with the father of the baby can easily do so outside of marriage. He can simply establish paternity, and his insurance and other benefits would cover the baby. We no longer have illegitimacy laws that punish babies born "out of wedlock."

Do not be swayed by the religious argument. We do not know of any religion that requires child marriage; actually, every major religion has supported legislation to end child marriage. Besides,

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[1] U.S. Department of State, et al., *United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls* (March 2016), https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf.
[2] Fraidy Reiss, *Child Marriage in the United States: Prevalence and Implications,* Journal of Adolescent Health (December 2021), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X21003414.
[3] Aditi Wahi et al, *The Lived Experience of Child Marriage in the United States*, Social Work Public Health (12 February 2019), https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30747055.
[4] Vivian Hamilton, *The Age of Marital Capacity: Reconsidering Recognition of Adolescent Marriage*, William & Mary Law School Scholarship Repository (2012), http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2467&context=facpubs.

the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld laws that incidentally forbid an act required by religion, if the laws do not target religious practice.[5]

No, ending child marriage does not impact reproductive rights. The U.S. Supreme Court has established that states should treat minors' abortion differently from minors' marriage, because the former is time sensitive while the latter is not.[6]

And no, do not agree to a loophole that allows emancipated minors to be subjected to a human rights abuse. Emancipation is for teens who cannot be reunited with their parents; it gives them some rights of adulthood so they can fend for themselves. Teens do not need marriage to fend for themselves.

Teens do not need marriage, period. If they are in an abusive home or cannot get health insurance from their parents, they deserve resources that do not require them to enter a contractual sexual relationship.

Under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5.3, the U.S. joined 192 other countries in promising to end child marriage by year 2030.[7] We have achieved that goal in six states so far, despite initial resistance from our colleagues.

Now we call on you, our fellow lawmakers, to join us. Every child in the U.S. is relying on us to keep our promise to the world and end all marriage before 18. No exceptions. No compromises.

Delaware Rep. Kim Williams
Delaware Former Sen. Anthony Delcollo
New Jersey Sen. Nellie Pou
New Jersey Asm. Nancy Munoz
Pennsylvania Rep. Perry Warren
Pennsylvania Rep. Jesse Topper
Pennsylvania Former Sen. John Sabatina
Minnesota Sen. Sandra Pappas
Minnesota Rep. Kaohly Her
Rhode Island Rep. Julie Casimiro
Rhode Island Sen. John Burke
New York Sen. Julia Salazar
New York Asm. Phil Ramos
Massachusetts Rep. Kay Khan
Massachusetts Former Sen. Harriette Chandler

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[5] 494 U.S. 872, *Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith* (No. 88-1213).
[6] 443 U.S. 622 (1979), *Bellotti v. Baird* (No. 78-329).
[7] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Sustainable Development* (2015), https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5.

January 9, 2023

Written Testimony in Support of HB34: Ending Child Marriage
Presented to the New Hampshire House Committee on Children and Family Law | January 10, 2023

Chair Pearson, Vice Chair Long, and distinguished committee members:

Protect Our Defenders is the pre-eminent national human rights organization dedicated to ending sexual violence, victim retaliation, misogyny, sexual prejudice, and racism in the military and combating a culture that has allowed it to persist. We honor, support, and give voice to survivors of military sexual violence. We seek reform to ensure all service members are provided a safe and respectful work environment free from misogyny and racism, and have access to a fair, impartially administered system of justice.

In order to fulfill our mission, we provide pro bono legal services to survivors of military sexual assault, advocate for military sexual assault reform, and publish and proliferate ground-breaking reports that expose the crises of sexual assault and racial discrimination in the military. Since our founding in 2011, we have assisted a number of child victims of military sexual assault and their families, who are left devastated following incidents that no child should ever have to endure. In FY 2020 alone, the DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) reported that there were 209 unique victims of child sexual abuse, 92.3% of which were female, and 7.7% were male.[1]

When it came to our attention that some lawmakers have resisted ending child marriage so that an active duty servicemember might be able to marry a child for the child to be able to benefit from spousal death benefits, we were left deeply shaken. The military has a crisis on its hands in the form of sexual assault, which has been acknowledged by the Secretary of Defense[2], military

[1] Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, Fiscal Year 2020, Appendix H: Child Sexual Abuse; https://www.sapr.mil/sites/default/files/Appendix_H_Child_Sexual_Abuse_FY2020.pdf
[2] Lolita C. Baldor, "SECDEF backs change in military sex assault prosecution," Military Times, June 22, 2021; https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2021/06/22/secdef-backs-change-in-military-sex-assault-prosecution/

leaders such as General Mark Milley[3], and the Commander in Chief, President Joe Biden[4]. Allowing for the perpetuation of child marriage under the guise that children stand to benefit is a fallacy. Under the Survivor Benefit Plan, servicemembers have the ability to designate a recipient for their death benefits, and that recipient is NOT limited only to spouses, thus enabling a servicemember to designate their benefits to whomever he or she desires.

We fear that continuing to proliferate the narrative that a servicemember should be allowed to marry children to ensure that child receives spousal benefits will enable those who wish to prey on children to do so under the guise of a legal union. This is very dangerous in any profession and in any setting, but especially within the U.S. military, which is already contending with a sexual assault crisis it cannot control.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very Respectfully,



Col Don Christensen, USAF (Ret)
President, Protect Our Defenders

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[3] Missy Ryan and Dan Lamothe, "'We haven't moved the needle' on sexual assault in the military, general says," The Washington Post, May 6, 2021; https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/military-sexual-assault/2021/05/06/a8f51a7c-ae98-11eb-8109-f8ba1ea2eeab_story.html

[4] Andrew Solender, "Joe Biden Says He Would Take A Hard Line on Military Sexual Assault," Forbes, April 29, 2020; https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewsolender/2020/04/29/joe-biden-says-he-would-take-a-hard-line-on-military-sexual-assault/?sh=ec2ef7678629

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB34: ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

PRESENTED TO HOUSE CHILDREN AND FAMILY LAW COMMITTEE ON JANUARY 10, 2023

Chairman Pearson, Vice Chairman Long, and Distinguished Committee Members:

AHA Foundation wishes to be recorded in strong support of HB34. AHA Foundation thanks the primary and co-sponsors of this bill for their support, and the Committee for prioritizing a hearing on this important legislation.

While the current marriage age in New Hampshire is 18, the state allows a dangerous exception: minors aged 16 and 17 can marry with parental consent and judicial approval. HB34 eliminates this dangerous exception to the marriage age, and reserves marriage, a serious legal contract, for those who have reached the legal age of majority.

Within the current legal framework, there are no criteria that a marriage involving a minor aged 16 or 17 must meet to be eligible for judicial approval. There is also no mechanism in place to ensure that the required parental consent is not in fact parental coercion. Minors who have not yet reached the age of majority can easily be forced or coerced into marriage or trapped in an abusive marriage in which they are forced to stay. Minors being coerced into marriage may fear familial violence should they refuse to comply, or they may be physically or emotionally manipulated into an unwanted marriage. Minors may also not have the resources necessary to find a way out of this desperate situation. Because they have not yet reached the legal age of majority, minors face significant legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home, enter a domestic violence shelter, retain an attorney, or file a legal action such as a divorce.

AHA Foundation has worked with victims facing forced and child marriage from across the U.S. and knows full well that these barriers are grounded in reality. The individual stories we have seen are also supported by data collected by the nonprofit Unchained At Last. Just between 2000 and 2017, 202 children as young as 14 were married in New Hampshire, and nearly 83 percent were minor girls wed to adult men. Importantly, teenagers aged 16 or 17 are actually the most at risk of child marriage; in fact, from 2000 to 2017, 88 percent of married children were 16 or 17 years old. Accordingly, the current law leaves the most vulnerable minors at risk.

Child marriage severely limits opportunities in health, education and economic freedom. It also increases risk of domestic violence. Given these harms, one case of child marriage is one too many. If mechanisms are in place that allow for hundreds of cases to slip through the cracks, the common sense solution is to enact the necessary law to close these gaps.

New Hampshire should not participate in child marriage, which is recognized by the U.S. State Department as a human rights abuse, and should not make it legally possible for parents to coerce minors to marry. Those at risk must be protected by a legal framework that guarantees their human rights. The solution is simple: eliminate the dangerous exception to the marriage age that places the children of New Hampshire at risk of exploitation and abuse and vote **YES** on HB34.

About AHA Foundation

AHA Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit founded by women's rights activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and is the leading organization working to end honor violence that shames, hurts or kills thousands of women and girls in the U.S. each year, and puts millions more at risk. We ensure that women and girls of all races, cultures, religions, beliefs and backgrounds who are facing honor violence have a way out, and that survivors get the help they need to thrive.

Since 2010, the Foundation's programs include: 1) compiling data on these crimes, which are not currently tracked by U.S. law enforcement or government agencies, 2) publishing reports and articles and organizing conferences about the continued oppression of women and girls in the U.S., 3) outreach and education to expand and strengthen state and national legislation for the protection of women and girls, 4) training of law enforcement and service providers, and 5) connecting women and girls in crisis to appropriate services. AHA Foundation has trained over 3,400 frontline service providers on responding to cases of gender based violence, honor violence and forced marriage, and partnered with Crisis Text Line to create America's first honor violence and forced marriage helpline.

CALIFORNIA COALITION TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

Testimony of Rima Nashashibi, Founder and President of Global Hope 365 in support of HB34.

Chair Rice, Vice Chair DiSimone, and other distinguished Members of the New Hampshire House and Family Law Committee. Global Hope 365 is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls, locally and nationally, by advocating for their safety through raising awareness, education, and empowerment. Our focus is on ending harmful practices towards women and girls such as Child Marriage, Human Trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence.

Child marriage remains a serious problem in present-day America. Recent research indicated that between 2000 and 2018 over 300,000 minors were married, mostly young girls married to adult men. Children lack the rights and resources of adults and are more vulnerable to coercion and predation. As a result, many child marriages are forced marriages, and/or are cover-ups for other abuse and exploitation and crimes such as statutory rape.

A number of Child Marriage Survivors indicated Parental Consent is Parental Coersion. The office on United Nations office on Drugs and Crime issued a report recently on the interlinkages between Forced Child Marriage and Human Trafficking which we all know involves Fraud, force and Coersion and benefiting commercial from.

Minors under 18 years of age, who would like to get married for various reasons have the luxury of waiting unlike victims of forced marriage where CHOICE has

335 Centennial Way, Suite 100, Tustin, CA 92780
P: 949-682-8973
Rima@GlobalHope365.org

been taking away from them and where STATUTORY RAPE is the norm on wedding night and every other night.

As you will hear, Marriage under the age of 18 has devastating, lifelong consequences, including greater vulnerability to sexual and domestic violence, increased medical and mental health problems, higher drop-out rates from high school and college, greater risk of poverty, and up to 80% divorce rates.

Forty three states allow for marriage under the age of 18, with parental and/or judicial consent.

The American Medical Association has called for an end to Child Marriage stating "Child marriage is associated with higher rates of sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancies, divorce, and intimate partner violence than women married at age 21." In addition to a higher rate of Infant and maternal mortality.

Statistics Regarding Child Marriage

- **Young women and girls ages 16-19 face intimate partner violence victimization rates almost three times the national average.**
- **The majority (70%-80%) of Child Marriages end in divorce.**
- **Minors who marry early are more likely to "discontinue their formal education prematurely, earn low wages, and live in poverty." Girls who marry early are fifty percent more likely to drop out of high school and four times less likely to graduate from college.**

335 Centennial Way, Suite 100, Tustin, CA 92780
P: 949-682-8973
Rima@GlobalHope365.org

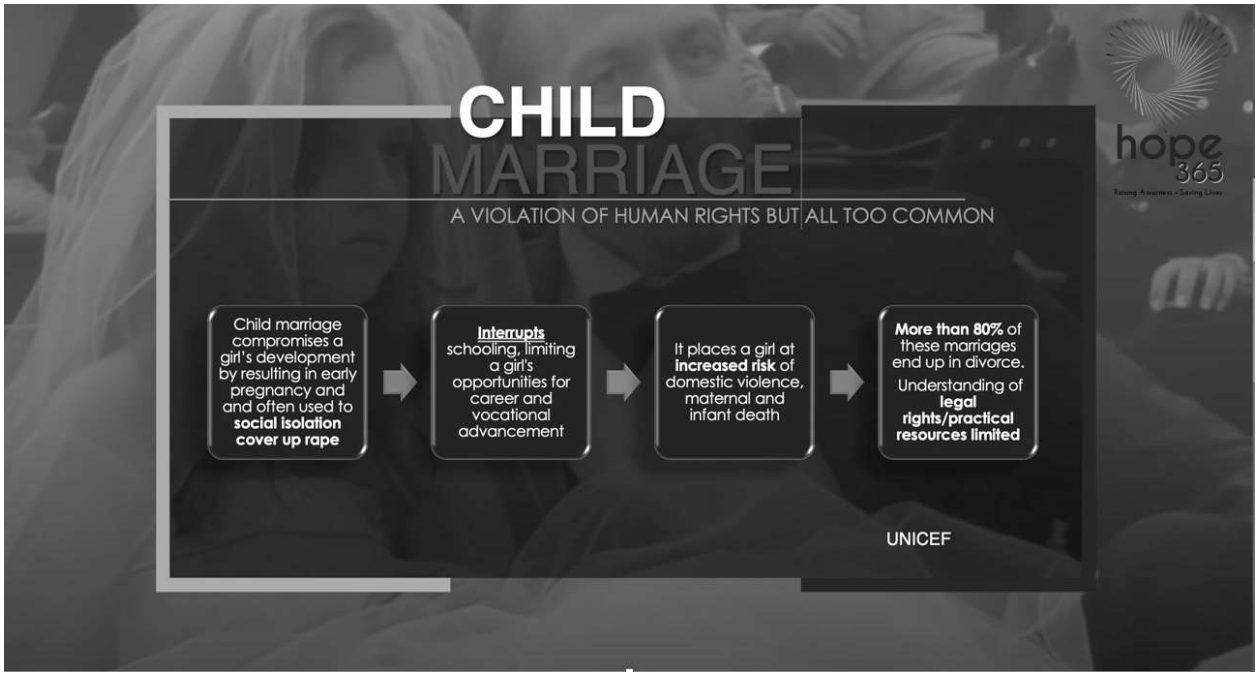
CALIFORNIA COALITION TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

Child Marriage is a Violation of Human Rights

•**UNICEF:** Child Marriage Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights.

•**Child Marriage is a violation of article 16(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

•**U.S. Department of State:** The United States has denounced child marriage as a Human Rights Abuse in other countries that contributes to economic hardship" in the words of a State Department document published in 2016.



335 Centennial Way, Suite 100, Tustin, CA 92780
P: 949-682-8973
Rima@GlobalHope365.org

Dear Honorable Members of the Children & Family Law Committee,

My name is Amanda Elizabeth Toll. I represent Cheshire 15 encompassing Keene, Westmoreland, Surry, Chesterfield, Hinsdale, and Walpole. I am writing today in support of HB 34-FN, introduced by amazing child advocate Cassandra Levesque. I am co-sponsoring this bill, which bans child marriage.

Child marriage is a human rights violation that disproportionately impacts girls, who are frequently married off to significantly older men. This practice puts children at a higher risk for poverty, domestic and sexual violence, and lower educational attainment. The United Nation unequivocally opposes child marriage, and there is no question it should be banned here in our state.

Keeping our children safe should be a bipartisan issue. I urge you to do the right thing and stand by our youngest Granite Staters, passing HB 34-FN and abolishing child marriage in NH.

Respectfully,
Amanda Elizabeth Toll

Service Women's Action Network

January 10, 2023

Written Testimony in Support of HB34: Ending Child Marriage

Presented to the New Hampshire House Committee on Children and Family Law | January 10, 2023

Chair Pearson, Vice Chair Long and distinguished committee members:

The Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), a not-for-profit organization advocating for servicewomen, past, present, and future. We urge you to close the loophole that allows a military exception to the marriage age in Alaska. We urge you to end all marriage before 18, without an exception for servicemembers or any other exceptions. We do not believe that marriage is acceptable under the age of 18 for any reason, including service to our nation. We understand that often the purpose of marriage for servicemembers under the age of 18 is to ensure that if a service member were to lose their life overseas, their spouse would receive full benefits for their service to our nation.

Under the Survivor Benefit Plan, service members can designate a significant other to receive benefits if the service member passes away; the Plan does not require the individuals to be married. Additionally, servicemember' military benefits extend to their children, regardless of the servicemembers' marital status so long as the child is properly recognized as a dependent. Death gratuity is also offered for service members who die while on active duty or while serving in certain reserve statuses. The death gratuity is the same regardless of the cause of death.

The longstanding purpose of the death gratuity has been to provide an immediate cash payment to assist survivors of deceased members of the Armed forces to meet their financial needs during the period immediately following a member's death and before other survivor benefits, if any, become available.

SWAN believes that using marriage for servicemembers leaving to war as a motive to keep marriage before 18 legal in this country is a misinformed stance. Servicemembers who choose to serve our country can select their beneficiaries; therefore, the requirement for marriage is needless.

A secondary consideration is the military health and housing benefits afforded to spouses. Military health and housing benefits through a spouse are not a solution for underage marriage. A child's economic dependency should not justify marriage before 18 years old. Underage marriage can create a long-term level of dependence that increases a spouse's chance of experiencing domestic violence.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our organization for additional information. We appreciate your continued support of our nation's service members and veterans.

Sincerely,

Deshauna Barber
CEO, Service Women's Action Network

Service Women's Action Network

1015 15th Street NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20005

www.servicewomen.org

Shamecca brown

· This is not aboutmaturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that minors do notposses· A child cannot retaina lawyer to get a divorce· Children should not beforced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape charge· There are legalprovisions in place to mitigate a significant other entering the militaryand pregnancy/ supporting children.· Child marriage is ahuman rights violation

Kerry Webb

It is my personal point of view that child marriage is a form of human trafficking. The definition of human trafficking is Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.”

Katie Parent

Child marriage is a human rights violation. Children should not be forced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape charge. A child cannot retain a lawyer to get a divorce. There are legal provisions in place to mitigate a significant other entering the military and pregnancy/ supporting children. This is not about maturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that minors do not posses .This is about protecting children.

Michelle Wagner

This is about legal rights and responsibilities. Allowing people younger than 18 to marry puts them in a legally precarious position, something we should consider in safeguarding our citizens.

Taylor St Jacques

Child marriage is not about maturity. A child is a child, and a parent giving permission for them to enter into a marriage is abuse. Child marriage is a human rights violation.

Elizabeth Greenberg

Children do not have the legal rights and protections. No one under the age of 18 should be married.

Andrea Folsom, MSW

As a mother to a teen girl, as well as a social worker, I know one thing clearly: children are just that, children. They are not old enough to vote, smoke, or drink. They cannot retain a lawyer or join the military. They lack the legal rights and responsibilities of adults. Child marriage is a clear human rights violation, and children should NEVER be forced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape charge. I SUPPORT HB 34 to raise the marriage age to adulthood - age 18 - anyone younger than that is a CHILD.

Donna Raycraft

Testimony HB 34 People who are not adults should not be allowed to enter into any contract, especially a marriage contract, which has lifelong implications. If a non-adult enters a marriage that becomes violent, the victim has no recourse. A child cannot legally hire an attorney to get away from the abuser. A child cannot legally lease an apartment to leave an abuser. A child cannot escape to most domestic violence crisis center shelters for safety. Even if a pregnancy is involved, it is better for a child to be raised in a safe, non-violent single-family home than in an abusive one. Single parenthood is no longer seen as shameful, and the parents of that child can decide to marry when both of them are no longer children, if that is their desire. Child marriage is a human rights violation.

Katlyn Wells

I am in support of this bill.

Krista LaFont-Leamey

I am a clinical social worker and a resident of NH. I am in support of HB 34, which would raise the age of marriage to 18. This is not about maturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that minors do not posses A child cannot retain a lawyer to get a divorce. This will force children to remain in potentially abusive relationships with no legal way to leave. In the case of sexual abuse/rape, Children should not be forced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape charge. Child marriage is a human rights violation. Thank you for considering my testimony when making this decision.

Katie Koenig

This is not about maturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that minors do not posses

Jane Pinard

I support this bill prohibiting child marriage

Sheila Renaud-Finnegan

Child marriage is a human rights violation. PERIOD

Susan Lombard

Legal contracts are limited to people age 18 or more, and a marriage contract should be allowed in the same manner.

Patricia Anastasia

I support this bill to raise the marriageable age to 18. Persons below the age of 18 do not have the legal protections and rights that

Elizabeth Ropp

I support raising the legal age of marriage to 18. This is a no brainer. The legal age to vote is 18 and the legal age to consume alcohol is 21. Marriage is a huge commitment that should not be considered until at least the legal age of adulthood.

Suzanne Austin

Child marriage is a human rights violation

Andrea Izzo

· This is not about maturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that minors do not posses· A child cannot retain a lawyer to get a divorce· Children should not be forced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape charge· There are legal provisions in place to mitigate a significant other entering the military and pregnancy/ supporting children.· Child marriage is a human rights violation

Rebecca Ayling

Ending child marriage protects children. It shifts the conversation from maturity to legal rights and responsibilities. My greatest concerns lie in a child being able to marry but NOT able to hire an attorney, enter the military, vote, etc. They are put into a situation that is beyond their legal access and rights. In order to appropriately and consistently protect children, we must end child marriage.

Mary Banach

This bill ought to be passed to protect vulnerable children and adolescents.

Jason Hunt

I support this bill and hold a firm belief that children should not be able to enter into any legal contract, including marriage, before the age of 18. Children under 18 (lower age in some states) cannot be tried as adults in a court of law. They cannot retain a lawyer for the purpose of divorce. Children required to have an adult present in order to see a doctor or receive certain treatments. The list goes on. I believe it defies logic to allow children under the age of 18 to enter into a legally binding contract, such as marriage.

Erin Swasey

I am in support of this bill.

Faye O'Neill

I support raising the legal age of marriage to 18. Anyone younger than that is a child and should not be making such a major decision.

Maura Fay

Raising the minimum age for marriage would protect girls from being victimized and forced into marriage by their families or by older men.

Jillian Beverstock

This is not about maturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that This is not about maturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that minors do not posses A child cannot retain a lawyer to get a divorce Children should not be forced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape charge There are legal provisions in place to mitigate a significant other entering the military and pregnancy/ supporting children. Child marriage is a human rights violation do not posses A child cannot retain a lawyer to get a divorce Children should not be forced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape charge There are legal provisions in place to mitigate a significant other entering the military and pregnancy/ supporting children. Child marriage is a human rights violation

Jan Schmidt

A marriage is a legal contract.

Robert Reisman

Children under 18 should not be permitted to marry. They could be exploited way too easily in this context. Please pass this ban on child marriage

Joanne Grobecker

I am in support of raising the age of marriage to 18 years old.

Lianne Moccia

I support raising the age of marriage to 18.

Grace Kindeke

Dear Esteemed Members of the Committee, please vote in support of this bill to raise the minimum age of marriage. This common sense bill will ensure that children are not coerced or forced into marriage before they are developmentally ready or legally able to enter into such a serious commitment. NH should not have a law that allows children to marry before they are afforded any of the legal protections and responsibilities of being of legal age. Thank you.

Rebecca McWilliams

It's past time to kill this archaic law and end child marriage in NH for good.

Bryan Marabella

I can’t believe there is actually opposition to this bill. If you’re not legally an adult till 18, then you shouldn’t be able to marry at 16.

Donna McDermott

Child marriage is a human rights violation!I support this bill.

Emily Filiano

This is not about maturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that minors do not posses. A child cannot retain a lawyer to get a divorce. Children should not be forced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape charge. There are legal provisions in place to mitigate a significant other entering the military and pregnancy/ supporting children. Child marriage is a human rights violation.

Doreen Desmarais

I totally support raising the marriage age to 18 in the state of NH

Brenda Fortier-Dube

Child marriage is a human rights violation, another form of child abuse, another example of how our society oppresses and doesn't protect women and children.

Cindy Thomas

After raising 4 children to successful adulthood, I remember clearly the teenager perspective on first love. I can imagine young teens making the rebellious, ill-advised to marry their love interest in order to ward off parental guidance. This bill would protect these vulnerable teens from making a mistake that is very life-altering. Please raise the marriageable age to 18 for males and females in the state of New Hampshire.

Assures more mature decision making and protection of minors.

Cassandra Spina

This is not about maturity, it is about legal rights & responsibilities that minors do not possesA child cannot retain a lawyer to get a divorceChildren should not be forced to marry their rapist so the rapist can avoid a statutory rape chargeThere are legal provisions in place to mitigate a significant other entering the military and pregnancy/ supporting children.Child marriage is a human rights violationI have worked in the field on Mental Health and Community mental health with children at risk and the passing of this bill will make a difference in the lives of children's mental health

Ellen Phillips

Children can not legally drink, smoke or vote before they are 28, yet we allow them to marry. This should change, with very limited exceptions… very.

Paula Herbert

In order to protect the rights of minor women, they should reach the age of majority, 18, before entering into marriage.

David Meuse

Bills similar to this one have been debated in every legislative session since 2017. Today others will testify to the history of this effort and outline the personal, social and emotional consequences of early marriage—either entered into willingly or under pressure. What I would like to do is attempt to counter the argument that because child marriages are relatively rare in New Hampshire, taking the time to change our law simply isn't worth our time. At a basic level, laws are put into place to protect our general safety, and to ensure our rights as citizens against abuses by other people, by organizations, and by the government itself. We have laws that cover many different things. But some of our most important laws—and much of the focus of this committee—address what is permissible and not permissible when it comes to minor children. We have these laws for a simple reason: As a society we recognize that children are more vulnerable than adults to certain types of abuse, harm, exploitation, and danger. While framing marriages involving children as "Romeo and Juliet stories" appeals to our romantic nature, the reality of many of these marriages veers as far from romance as you can get. Some serve as "get-out-of-jail-free" cards for adult men who otherwise might be charged with felonious sexual assault of a minor. Others serve as a way to "legitimize" a relationship in the eyes of parents and their peers that results in a pregnancy or loss of virginity. But many also simply serve as an escape valve from childhood for young people who lack the maturity to fully understand the potential consequences on their education, economic potential, and emotional wellbeing. Allowing parents and judges to be part of the process doesn't make it right. Instead, it too often makes them complicit in an activity that has great potential to do harm to the young people involved—especially for young women. Please make New Hampshire one of the increasing number of states that is saying "no" to child marriage by saying "yes" to House Bill 34. Rep. David Meuse, Rockingham 37 (Portsmouth, Newington, New Castle)

Lois Cote

Today's neuroscientific community has confirmed that the human brain does not complete development of the pre-frontal lobe areas until the mid-twenties. This is where executive functions such as self=regulation, insight, ability to reflect before acting and discernment in decision-making are managed. Even at 18, a person is years from this maturity, but still farther along that at earlier stages of adolescence. Please raise the age to 18.

Dawn Tyree

Dear Distinguished Commitee Memebers,

Patty Levesque

New Hampshire should be protecting children, not allowing fully grown men and women to marry children. Many offer facts, some offered opinion, we the supporters of the bill hope you are wise enough to know the difference.

HB 34-FN - AS INTRODUCED

2023 SESSION

23-0095
06/08

HOUSE BILL ***34-FN***

AN ACT relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen.

SPONSORS: Rep. Levesque, Straff. 4.

COMMITTEE: Children and Family Law

ANALYSIS

This bill changes the marriageable age in the state from 16 to 18.

- -

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics.***
Matter removed from current law appears [~~in brackets and struckthrough.~~]
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

HB 34-FN - AS INTRODUCED

23-0095
06/08

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Three

AN ACT relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 Marriageable. Amend RSA 457:4 to read as follows:

457:4 Marriageable. No person below the age of [~~16~~] ***18*** years shall be capable of contracting a valid marriage, and all marriages contracted by such persons shall be null and void.

2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.

LBA
23-0095
10/7/22

HB 34-FN- FISCAL NOTE
AS INTRODUCED

AN ACT relative to raising the age of marriage to eighteen.

FISCAL IMPACT: [X] State [ ] County [X] Local [ ] None

	Estimated Increase / (Decrease)			
STATE:	**FY 2023**	**FY 2024**	**FY 2025**	**FY 2026**
Appropriation	$0	$0	$0	$0
Revenue	$0	Indeterminable Decrease	Indeterminable Decrease	Indeterminable Decrease
Expenditures	$0	$50,000	$0	$0
Funding Source:	[X] General [ ] Education [ ] Highway [X] Other - Fund for Domestic Violence Grant Program (RSA 173-B:15)			

LOCAL:

Revenue	$0	Indeterminable Decrease	Indeterminable Decrease	Indeterminable Decrease
Expenditures	$0	$0	$0	$0

METHODOLOGY:

This bill changes the marriageable age in New Hampshire from 16 to 18. The Department of State indicates this change would require an update to the vital records software at an estimated cost of $50,000. There would be an indeterminable impact on in revenue to cities, towns and the Domestic Violence Grant Program. In accordance with RSA 457:29, for each marriage license issued, $7 is retained locally and $43 is deposited into the fund for the Domestic Violence Grant Program. The Department reports the number of marriages where one party is under 18 varies year to year. Since 1989 this range has been between 0 and 115 marriages.

The Judicial Branch indicates although there could be an increase in the number of marriage petitions filed for persons below the age of consent, the Branch assumes the change would not have an appreciable fiscal impact on the Branch.

It is assumed that any fiscal impact would occur after FY 2023.

AGENCIES CONTACTED:

Department of State and Judicial Branch