



REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY MAST
765 ROAD 110
EMPORIA, KS 66801

FEBRUARY 19, 2013

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE MAST,

I am writing on behalf of the AHA Foundation in support of House Bill 2217, which was introduced on February 5, 2013 by the Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice. This Bill criminalizes the act of female genital mutilation (FGM) and makes it a Level Three Person-Felony. The Bill prohibits individuals from performing female genital mutilation in Kansas, as well as taking a girl out of the state to undergo the procedure.

FGM is a traditional practice that involves the partial or complete removal of female genitalia, and results in significant and lasting medical consequences to victims. Immediately following the procedure, girls are at risk for severe pain, shock, bleeding, bacterial infection, and injury to nearby tissue. Some girls die from the procedure itself. In the long term, girls and women who have suffered FGM are at risk for recurrent bladder and urinary tract infections, cysts, infertility, and complications during intercourse and childbirth. Women who have suffered FGM may also experience long-term emotional and psychological effects due to being victimized in this way.

While we may think of FGM as a custom that only occurs in foreign countries, research conducted by the African Women's Health Center of the Brigham and Women's Hospital found that approximately 228,000 women and girls living in the United States had undergone or were at risk of undergoing FGM. In addition to instances of FGM being performed within the United States, a significant number of girls are at risk of 'vacation cutting', in which females living in the United States are taken to their parents' country of origin during school breaks to undergo the procedure.

Female genital mutilation has been a federal crime since 1996, and twenty states have enacted specific criminal prohibitions against FGM. Last month, the President signed into law the Transport for Female Genital Mutilation Act, which strengthened the existing federal FGM ban by making it illegal to knowingly transport a girl out of the country for the purpose of undergoing the procedure. These laws send a strong deterrent message to parents considering subjecting their daughters to FGM, and reflect the global condemnation of FGM as a form of gender-based violence.

As you know, Kansas currently does not have any laws specifically banning FGM. Enacting this legislation would send a strong message that FGM – a brutal crime and human rights violation – is not acceptable in Kansas. Accordingly, I urge you to enact House Bill 2217 as soon as possible.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this bill or if you would like additional information about female genital mutilation and the threat to girls in the United States.

Sincerely,

Manon DeFelice

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