

Dear Chair Sears and Senate Judiciary Committee Members Baruth, Hashim, Norris, and Vyhovsky:

My name is Marguerite Adelman, and I am a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) of Burlington and Champlain Valley Amnesty International. Our organizations are members of the Vermont Coalition to End Child Marriage. As human rights, social justice, peace organizations, we strongly support H.148 and encourage you to vote **Yes** on this important bill for girls in Vermont.

Child marriage before 18 is a human rights abuse. In July 2015, the Human Rights Council of the United Nations adopted its first substantive resolution recognizing child and forced marriage as a human rights violation. In addition, marriage before 18 is recognized as a human rights abuse by the U.S. State Department because of the devastating lifelong consequences - especially for girls.

Child marriage threatens the lives and futures of girls, robbing them of their agency to make decisions about their lives; disrupting their education; making them more vulnerable to sexual abuse and violence, discrimination, and mental health disorders; and preventing their full participation in economic, political, and social spheres.

Child marriage may lead to women and girls attempting to flee their communities or commit suicide to avoid or escape the marriage.

In the U.S. girls who marry before 18 are:

- Less likely to finish high school or graduate from college
- Three times more likely to have at least 5 children
- 31% more likely to live in poverty

It's even worse for pregnant teens who marry.

- They are more likely to suffer economic deprivation and instability than pregnant teens who stay single.
- And as 70-80% of child marriages end in divorce, a pregnant teen will likely end up in situation where she has more children than she would have had if she remained single, but has less education and less income, and potentially has nowhere to go and is completely on her own when her marriage fails.

We may not be able to do much about child marriage across the globe, but we can certainly stop child marriage here in Vermont and close the loopholes that force some girls to get married without their full, free and informed consent. Vote Yes on H.148 and defend the human rights of girls in our state.

Sincerely,

Marguerite Adelman

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Burlington Branch

Champlain Valley Amnesty International Branch

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