



The Massachusetts Chapter

May 25, 2017

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Senator William Brownsberger, Chair
Joint Committee on the Judiciary
24 Beacon Street, Room 504
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Claire Cronin, Chair
Joint Committee on the Judiciary
24 Beacon Street, Room 136
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Representative Cronin and Senator Brownsberger:

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) representing approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of children by providing quality health care and advocacy for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. The MCAAP strongly supports “An Act to Protect Girls from Genital Mutilation” (H2333 and S788). In keeping with our mission, we urge you to support this bill to ban Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

FGM involves removing part or all of a girl’s healthy sex organs and surrounding tissue for non-medical reasons, often resulting in serious health consequences, the risk of death childbirth, and lifelong trauma. There are no health benefits to this practice. Girls who are subjected to FGM are commonly between the ages of four and ten years old. The procedure is typically performed without anesthesia, using a knife or razor.

According to a recent CDC study, half a million women and girls living in the United States have been cut or are at risk of FGM. Fourteen thousand such women and girls reside in Massachusetts. Some of these girls are in danger of being cut either in this country or back in the country from which their families emigrated. In some communities, even if parents do not want to continue the practice of FGM, the social pressures from others in their community can force parents to subject their girls to FGM.

This bill will act as a preventative tool for families who want to end this practice but remain afraid of social pressures to continue it. Also, the bill will provide for community-wide education on the harmfulness of FGM.

Twenty-four states have laws banning FGM. Massachusetts is not one of them. We need this law now to protect our girls and to send a strong message that the practice of FGM is not tolerated in Massachusetts.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DeWayne Pursley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

DeWayne Pursley, M.D., MPH, FAAP
President, the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics