



## **H.1478 and S.24, *An Act To End Child Marriage in Massachusetts***

***Lead Sponsors: Representative Kay Khan and  
Senator Harriette L. Chandler***

### **BILL SUMMARY**

- ***Our current statutes are inadequate to address this unique challenge. Therefore, this bill would ban marriage under the age of 18 which is presently allowed with parental and judicial consent.***

### **WHY THIS LEGISLATION IS NECESSARY**

- Nearly 1,231 children as young as 14 were married in Massachusetts between 2000 and 2016 - and 83.7 percent (1,030) of them were girls wed to adult men. For example, a 14-year-old girl married a 23-year-old man in 2003. The oldest person during this time period to marry a minor was a 39-year-old man who married a 17-year-old girl in 2014.
- A national study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2011 estimated that nearly 1.7 million children/women in the U.S. had gotten married at age 15 or younger and over 9.4 million had married at age 16 or younger.
- Delaware and New Jersey in 2018 became the first states to pass bills to end all child marriage (marriage before 18), without exceptions. Other states also are considering legislation to end all marriage before 18, without exceptions. Similar legislation also passed recently in several other states, though those bills were not as strong: They still allow marriage before 18 in some circumstances.
- Married children, because they are minors, face many obstacles when they try to leave or resist such a marriage including obtaining services from the Department of Children and Families, bringing legal action including filing for divorce, renting, shelter admission, and opening a checking account.
- Child marriage undermines the child's health, education and economic opportunities and increases the risk of domestic violence and divorce. Between 70-80% of marriages involving children end in divorce. For teen mothers, getting married and later divorcing can more than double the likelihood for poverty.
- A 2006 Department of Justice study found that girls and young women aged 16-24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence among all such victims, noting that girls aged 16-19 face victimization rates almost triple the national average.
- Women who marry in their teens tend to have more children, earlier and more closely spaced, which can prevent them from accessing education and work opportunities, limiting their earning power and ability to be financially independent in the event of domestic violence or divorce. Women who marry before the age of 19 are 50% more likely to drop out of high school and four times less likely to graduate from college.





## **ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS IN SUPPORT**

Advocates for Harvard Law Students  
AHA Foundation  
Cape Cod ACCESS  
Cape & Islands Commission on the Status of Women  
Cape Cod Women for Change  
Children's Trust MA  
Children's League of Massachusetts  
Equality Now  
Girls Inc. – Holyoke  
Global Citizen  
Greater Boston Legal Services  
Human Rights Watch  
International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School  
MA Coalition to End Human Trafficking  
Massachusetts High School Democrats  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Mass NOW  
Middlesex District Attorney Marian T. Ryan  
MSCPP  
National Association of Social Workers, MA Chapter  
Office of the Child Advocate  
Pathways for Change  
SWIFT: Supporting Women in Financial Transition  
Tahirih Justice Center  
UNICEF USA  
Unchained At Last  
Upper Cape Cod Women's Coalition  
We Stand Together – Martha's Vineyard  
Womanshelter/ Compañeras  
Zonta International, Division 1  
We Stand Together – Martha's Vineyard  
Deborah Benson, Advocate for Gender Equality  
Deborah Fallon, Portal To Hope  
Margaret Drew, Assoc. Prof., UMASS Dartmouth  
Jamie A. Sabino, Consulting Family Law Attorney  
Salma Waheedi, Harvard Law School  
Dr. Shanta Pandey, Boston College School of Social Work

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