

Submitter: Sara Tasneem  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB548  
Testimony in Support of SB 548:  
February 19, 2025

Chair Prozanski, and Distinguished Committee Members:

My name is Sara Tasneem, and I am a survivor of forced child marriage. I hope that no other child must go through what I did, which is why I support legislation to end marriage under the age of 18, with absolutely no exceptions.

At fifteen years old I was forced to marry a stranger who was 13 years older than me. I was legally married to my rapist and abuser at the age of 16 and clearly pregnant – which was evidence of rape.

At the age of fifteen, during a summer visit to see my dad in California, 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. My mother did not even know that this was taking place she thought I was going to come home after the summer and finish high school. After a short spiritual wedding ceremony that evening, in Los Angeles, CA, I was handed over to my new husband and physically left with him. I lost my bodily autonomy, my reproductive rights, my childhood, my education, my freedom, and myself that night. I would never be the same person again. I was not allowed to go back to school. Instead, I was taken out of the country raped daily and impregnated almost immediately. My opportunities were stolen from me like so many other victims of child marriage.

Six months after our spiritual ceremony we returned to California. I was legally married at the age of 16 and pregnant in Reno NV to my rapist. At that time, it only took one signature from my father and he did not have to be there, he just signed on my behalf. My mother did not know I was being married off to a child rapist. My pregnant belly should have alerted authorities to a rape instead of rubber stamping my 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.

It took me seven long years of surviving my abusive relationship and overcoming enormous obstacles to separate and file for divorce. It then took three years to finalize my divorce. As a minor, I faced extreme and numerous barriers to being able

to leave my abusive marriage. Sadly, I am not the exception. It has taken me years to recognize and address the severe impacts child marriage has had on me, including PTSD from the prolonged abuse, recovering from the financial abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and physical abuse, the educational impacts of being taken out of school as a fifteen-year-old led directly to extreme poverty. It has taken me years to recover.

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

Respectfully,  
Sara Tasneem  
Survivor / Advocate