



CALIFORNIA
COALITION
TO END CHILD
MARRIAGE

May 1, 2025

The Honorable Chair Kropf, Vice Chair Wallan, Vice Chair Chotzen, and Distinguished Committee Members

Re: SB 548 (Senator Sollman, Smith DB, Representative Mannix), Increases the minimum legal marriageable age to 18 years of age - SUPPORT

Dear all,

My name is Rima Nashashibi. I am the founder and president of Global Hope 365, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to ending harmful practices toward women and girls, such as child marriage, human trafficking, and other forms of gender based violence. I write today **in support of SB 548**.

Child marriage remains a serious problem in present-day America. Child Marriage is shockingly still legal in 37 states, including Oregon.

According to recent research by McGill University, between 2000 and 2018, approximately 300,000 minors were married in the U.S., with some 3,604 minors married in Oregon between 2000 and 2021, mostly young girls married to adult men. Children lack the rights and resources of adults, which makes them vulnerable to coercion and predation. As a result, many child marriages are forced marriages, and/or are cover-ups for child abuse and exploitation and other sex crimes such as statutory rape.

Of those 300,000, some 3,604 minors were married in Oregon between 2000 and 2021.¹ About 83% were girls wed to adult men² and at least 1,272 and possibly as many as 1,814 marriages between 2000 and 2014 occurred with a spousal age difference that would have met the definition of a sex crime outside of marriage.³

Several Child Marriage Survivors we work with indicated that Parental Consent is Parental Coercion. They also emphasize that testifying in support of this resolution makes them relive their trauma, they feel it is still important enough for them to be the voice of the voiceless to prevent this from happening to other children, no matter the cost to them. They are NOT statistics. These are human beings, and it is people's lives we are talking about here, and kids at that.

Under a forced marriage, an individual may face threats of physical, verbal, or financial abuse or the use of physical force to make them agree to marriage or to remain in a marriage that they want to leave.

The current marriage-age law allows one parent to enter a 17-year-old into marriage with nothing more than "written consent."⁴ This is a serious issue and challenge in Oregon.

¹ Child Marriage in the United States: Prevalence and Implications, Journal of Adolescent Health (December 2021), [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(21\)00341-4/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(21)00341-4/fulltext). Data after 2018 estimated based on existing trendline (because the Oregon Center for Health Statistics was unable to provide actual data for those years).

² Based on Unchained's analysis of marriage-certificate data retrieved from the Oregon Center for Health Statistics.

³ Alissa Koski, et. al., Child Marriage or Statutory Rape?, Journal of Adolescent Health (March 2022), [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(21\)00552-8/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(21)00552-8/fulltext).

⁴ Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) §§ 106.010 and 106.060. Note that only one parent or guardian's "consent" is required.

335 Centennial Way, Suite 100, Tustin, CA 92780



CALIFORNIA
COALITION
TO END CHILD
MARRIAGE

The current law does not seek any input from a teen who is being entered into marriage, nor does it provide recourse for a teen being forced to marry – even if the teen sobs openly and begs for help.

The marriage-age laws give a “get out of jail free” card to child rapists: Sex with a 17-year-old is a Class C misdemeanor⁵ if the perpetrator is three or more years older⁶ – unless the 17-year-old is married.⁷

In addition, teens are automatically emancipated upon marriage,⁸ which terminates their parents’ financial obligation to them,⁹ regardless of the teen’s financial circumstances. Usually, minors cannot be emancipated unless a court determines they are self-sufficient.¹⁰ This can easily force the teen to become financially dependent on their spouse, which is a risk factor for domestic violence.¹¹

Child Marriage also incentivizes forced child marriage, so a parent can get out of a child support obligation or child custody battle. In addition, child marriage encourages the legal trafficking of minors under the guise of marriage.¹²

For all the above reasons, **Global Hope 365 supports SB548** a bipartisan legislation to keep the marriage age at 18 but eliminate the loopholes that allow marriage before that age and urges the esteemed committee to pass this important bill. Please contact me at Rima@globalhope365.org or call me at 949-462-4888 with any further questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Rima Nashashibi
Founder and President
Global Hope 365

⁵ ORS §§ 163.315(1)(a), 163.445.

⁶ ORS § 163.345(1),(3).

⁷ ORS § 163.445(1): “A person commits the crime of sexual misconduct if the person engages in sexual intercourse or oral or anal sexual intercourse with an unmarried person under 18 years of age” (emphasis added).

⁸ ORS § 109.520: “... all persons shall be deemed to have arrived at the age of majority upon their being married according to law.

⁹ ORS § 419B.552(1)(b)-(c).

¹⁰ ORS § 419B.558(1)(b).

¹¹ Nancy Salamone, Domestic Violence and Financial Dependency, Forbes (2 September 2010), <https://www.forbes.com/2010/09/02/women-money-domestic-violence-forbes-woman-net-worth-personal-finance.html>.

¹² Federal law (8 U.S. Code § 1101) does not set a minimum age for spousal or fiancé visas; instead it defers to the law in the state where the couple will reside (see: U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, How the U.S. Immigration System Encourages Child Marriages (11 January 2019), <https://www.hsdl.org/c/abstract/?docid=820021>). Thus Oregon’s current marriage age laws allow and encourage 17-year-olds to be legally trafficked for their citizenship, forced to marry adults overseas so the adults can get a visa and path to citizenship. Oregon’s laws also allow and encourage individuals to legally traffic 17-year-olds from overseas to Oregon as their spouse.



CALIFORNIA
COALITION
TO END CHILD
MARRIAGE

Additional Child Marriage Information:

The **American Medical Association** has called for an end to Child Marriage in resolution H-60.901, 2019, stating, “Child marriage is associated with higher rates of sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancies, divorce, and intimate partner violence than women married at age 21.” In addition to a higher rate of Infant and maternal mortality.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime issued a report recently on the interlinkages between Forced Child Marriage and Human Trafficking, which we all know involves Fraud, force, and Coercion and benefiting commercially by the receipt of payments from the use and abuse of another human being.

Statistics Regarding Child Marriage

- Young women and girls ages 16-19 face intimate partner violence victimization rates almost three times the national average.
- The majority (70%-80%) of Child Marriages end in divorce.
- Minors who marry early are more likely to “discontinue their formal education prematurely, earn low wages, and live in poverty.” Girls who marry early are fifty percent more likely to drop out of high school and four times less likely to graduate from college.

Child Marriage is a Violation of Human Rights

- UNICEF: Child Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights.
- Child Marriage is a violation of Article 16(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- U.S. Department of State: The United States has denounced child marriage as a Human Rights Abuse in other countries that contributes to economic hardship, in the words of a State Department document published in 2016. What about our country and our kids?