

Testimony in Support of SB 548:

May 6, 2025

Distinguished Committee Members:

My name is Sara Tasneem, and I am a survivor of forced child marriage. I am testifying today in hopes to highlight the very real abuses that minors face when forced into marriages; which is why I support SB548 to end marriage under the age of 18.

At the age of fifteen, during a summer visit to see my dad in California, I was forced into a spiritual 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. After a short spiritual wedding ceremony that evening, I was handed over to a stranger who was thirteen years older than me, and left in his care. I lost all my rights and freedom that night and I would never be the same person again.

Six months after our *spiritual wedding* ceremony I was *legally* married at the age of 16 and pregnant to my rapist who was 29 years old at the time. At that time, it only took one signature from my father on a notarized letter to consent on my behalf. My mother did not even know I was being married off to a child rapist. My pregnant belly **should** have alerted the 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. As a minor, I faced extreme and numerous barriers to being able to leave my abusive marriage. I could not access domestic violence shelters, legal services or other life saving services as a minor. Sadly, I am not the exception.

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 abuse.

Respectfully,

Sara Tasneem

Survivor / Advocate

<https://tasneemsfadvocacy.home.blog/>

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/mediaplayer?clientID=4879615486&eventID=2025021246>