



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 729, RELATING TO MARRIAGE OF MINORS.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

DATE: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 **TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 329

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Erin K. S. Torres, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Takayama and Members of the Committee:

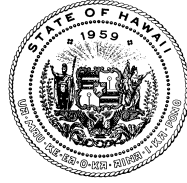
The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

The purpose of the bill is to end the practice of child marriage in Hawai'i by raising the legal age of marriage to the age of eighteen years and prohibiting parents, guardians, custodians, and the Family Court from consenting to child marriages. The bill achieves its goal by amending sections 571-2, 571-11, 572-1, 572-10, 577-25(a) and (c), 580-22, and 587A-15(c) and (d), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), and repealing sections 572-2 and 572-9, HRS.

The bill, as currently drafted, does not address section 560:5-208(b)(5), HRS, which empowers a guardian of a minor to consent to the marriage of the minor. To ensure clarity and consistency, we recommend repealing this section. This suggested amendment to the UPC would clarify that guardians do not have the power to consent to child marriage.

If the Committee chooses to pass this bill, we respectfully request that this amendment be incorporated to achieve the Legislature's intent.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our comments.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

Testimony COMMENTING on HB729
RELATING TO MARRIAGE OF MINORS.

REP. GREGG TAKAYAMA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: February 5, 2025

Room Number: 329

1 **Fiscal Implications:** N/A.

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health provides the following information to the
3 Legislature in consideration of this measure, which were derived from marriage license data. In
4 general, marriage with persons under the age of 18 is an uncommon occurrence, but there are a
5 small number of outlier cases that prompt closer scrutiny.

6 Hawaii-Based Couples

7 From 1/1/2010 to 9/30/2020, out of 237,163 marriages there were 216 people under the age of 18
8 (153 brides and 63 grooms), or 0.09% where both partners claims Hawaii residency. A further
9 breakdown reveals:

10 • Brides:

11 ○ 16 years old = 30

12 ○ 17 years old = 108

13 • Grooms:

14 ○ 16 years old = 8

15 ○ 17 years old = 48

1 The vast majority of couples are within a few years of each other, i.e., teens marrying teens, but
2 there are a small number of outliers ranging from 10 to 21 years age difference for both bride and
3 groom, e.g. thirty-plus year old man/woman marrying teen girl/boy.

4 The vast majority are between Hawaii residents, the rest are mainland/Hawaii or foreign/Hawaii
5 in that order. Ranked by county in descending order, partners were from the City and County of
6 Honolulu, followed by Maui, Hawaii, and Kauai

7 Couples with Hawaii Resident and Mainland/Other Partner

8 In the same time frame, 19 marriages involved a person under 18 and a non-resident. Similar to
9 Hawaii-only couples, most participants were within a few years of each other though there were
10 two clear outliers where the groom was older by many years. Also, one state of origin for both
11 bride and groom is over-represented, with the rest mostly from the West Coast but not
12 exclusively.

13 • Brides:

14 ○ 16 years old = 6

15 ○ 17 years old = 9

16 • Grooms:

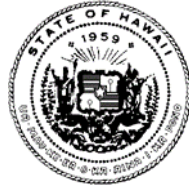
17 ○ 16 years old = 2

18 ○ 17 years old = 5

19 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

20 **Proposed Amendments:** N/A.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



RYAN I. YAMANE
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

February 4, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
House Committee on Health

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 729 – RELATING TO MARRIAGE OF MINORS.**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 5, 2025, Time 2:00 pm
Conference Room 329 & Videoconferencing, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the bill's intent, defers to the Department of the Attorney General, and provides comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to eliminate child marriage in Hawaii by raising the minimum age for marriage from 16 to 18. It removes the authority of parents and the family court to approve a minor's marriage and eliminates spousal cohabitation after both parties reach the legal age as an exception for annulment based on nonage. The bill also includes conforming amendments.

DHS agrees that raising the legal marriage age to 18 ensures that both individuals involved in the marriage are at least 18 years old at the time of the marriage. Requiring individuals to be 18 at the time of marriage may reduce, as noted in the preamble, the undo pressure or coercion that minors may experience, especially if the minor is pregnant or is a victim of sex trafficking.

Pregnant youth, if eligible, may receive most public benefits. DHS Child Welfare Services also provides services for youth identified as victims of sex trafficking.

February 4, 2025

Page 2

Regarding Child Welfare Services, Section 8 of the measure amends Section 587A-15(c) and (d), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), deleting the right of a child's family and the authorized agency that has permanent custody of the child to consent to marriage when the child is involved in a Child Welfare Services case.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



February 3, 2025

Testimony in Support of HB729, Relating to Marriage of Minors

To: Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
Representative Sue L. Keohokapu-Lee, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Health

From: Llasmin Chaîne, LSW, Executive Director, Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in Support of HB729, Relating to Marriage of Minors

Hearing: Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

On behalf of the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women, I would like to thank the committee for hearing this important bill. I would like to express my strong support of HB729, which raises the minimum age to enter into marriage from sixteen to eighteen years of age and repeals the authority of parents and the family court to consent to a minor's marriage.

Child marriage is more likely to happen to **girls (86%)** than boys (14%), most often at age 16 or 17, which is usually too young to enter a domestic violence shelter or to file for divorce, even if their partner is abusive.¹ Women who marry before age 19 face a **23 percent higher risk of heart attack, diabetes, cancer and stroke**² than do women who marry between ages 19 and 25, partly due to the added stress and loss of education that comes with early marriage.³

As consequences of child marriages have been documented to include negative effects on health and education, and an increased likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence victimization⁴, I respectfully urge this Committee to pass HB729. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

Llasmin Chaîne, LSW
Executive Director, Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women

¹ Child Marriage – Shocking Statistics. Unchained At Last. <https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-shocking-statistics/>

² Dupre, M. E., & Meadows, S. O. (2007). Disaggregating the Effects of Marital Trajectories on Health. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(5), 623-652. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X06296296>

³ Reiss, Fraidy. (2017, February 10) Why can 12-year-olds still get married in the United States? *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/02/10/why-does-the-united-states-still-let-12-year-old-girls-get-married/>

⁴ Child Marriage Poses Serious Risks to Children. Tahirih Justice Center. <https://www.tahirih.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Child-Marriage-Impacts-One-Pager-updated-5.8.-2020-REGULAR-PRINT.pdf>

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 12:24:25 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Barrett	Kauai County Committee on the Status of Women	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislative Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB729, which raises the minimum age for marriage from sixteen to eighteen, removes parental and judicial consent for minors to marry, and eliminates outdated exceptions that enable child marriage. This bill is crucial in protecting Hawaii's youth from the lifelong consequences of early marriage. It ensures that all individuals enter marriage as fully legal adults, capable of making informed and independent decisions about their future.

Child marriage is a deeply concerning issue that disproportionately affects young girls, increasing their risk of domestic violence, poverty, limited educational opportunities, and adverse health outcomes. Studies have shown that minors who marry before the age of eighteen face significantly higher rates of divorce, financial instability, and mental health struggles compared to those who marry as adults. Moreover, parental or judicial consent laws have often been exploited, placing vulnerable minors in coercive situations where they may have little real choice.

By raising the legal marriage age to eighteen without exception, Hawaii joins a growing number of states taking action to eliminate child marriage and protect the fundamental rights of young people. This legislation reinforces that marriage should be a commitment entered into by two consenting adults—not by children who may not have the legal autonomy or life experience to make such a serious decision.

I urge you to pass this bill and affirm Hawaii's commitment to safeguarding Keiki's well-being, rights, and future.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori Barrett, Chair

Kauai County Committee on the Status of Women

808-212-7556

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:00:11 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elena Cabatu	Zonta Club of Hilo	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Full Support: HB729, Relating to Marriage of Minors.

Please accept my testimony in full support of HB729, that aims to:

- Raise the minimum age to enter into marriage from sixteen to eighteen years of age.
- Repeal the authority of parents and the family court to consent to a minor's marriage.
- Repeals spousal cohabitation after the parties attain legal age as an exception for an annulment based on nonage.
- Makes conforming amendments.

Currently, Hawai‘i's laws allow children as young as sixteen years of age to marry. State law further authorizes the family court to approve a marriage of a child who is fifteen years of age. Comparatively, sexual assault laws criminalize sexual conduct with a fifteen-year-old, though an exception is made if the fifteen-year-old is legally married to the sexual partner or the sexual partner is not more than five years older than the minor victim. Based on department of health data, at least 800 children were married in Hawai‘i since 2000, with eighty per cent of these marriages being girls marrying adult men.

We know that child marriage is a human rights violation and a severe impediment to social and economic development, resulting in states and countries considering legislation to end the practice of allowing children to marry. The United Nations Children's Fund describes child marriage as any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of eighteen and an adult or another child. United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, relating to gender equality, sets the year 2030 as the target for ending child marriage. The Sustainable Development Goals were unanimously adopted in 2015 by all one hundred ninety-three United Nations member states including the United States.

It's time for Hawai‘i to end child marriage and join the ranks of other state that have already taken the step: Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, Michigan, Washington, Virginia, and New Hampshire, along with American Samoa and the United States Virgin Islands. Similar legislation has been introduced in several other states as well as Congress. I strongly urge you and members of the committee to support HB729 to end child marriage.

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 11:26:30 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julie Tulang	Zonta Club of Hilo	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please accept my testimony in full support of HB729, that aims to:

- Raise the minimum age to enter into marriage from sixteen to eighteen years of age.
- Repeal the authority of parents and the family court to consent to a minor's marriage.
- Repeals spousal cohabitation after the parties attain legal age as an exception for an annulment based on nonage.
- Currently, Hawaii's laws allow children as young as sixteen years of age to marry. State law further authorizes the family court to approve the marriage of a child who is fifteen years of age. Comparatively, sexual assault laws criminalize sexual conduct with a fifteen-year-old, though an exception is made if the fifteen-year-old is legally married to the sexual partner or the sexual partner is not more than five years older than the minor victim. Based on the Department of Health data, at least 800 children have been married in Hawaii since 2000, with eighty percent of these marriages being girls marrying adult men.

**Testimony in Support of HB729: Relating to Marriage of Minors
Presented to the Hawai'i House Committee on Health | February 5, 2025**

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Distinguished Committee Members:

Unchained At Last is the only organization dedicated to ending forced and child marriage in Hawai'i and across the U.S. through direct services and advocacy. **Unchained urges you to vote "YES" on HB729.**

Child Marriage Is a Serious Problem: The marriage age is 18, but dangerous loopholes allow 16- and 17-year-olds to marry with parental "consent" and 15-year-olds to marry with parental consent and judicial approval.¹

Dangers in the Current Law

- When a child is forced to marry, the perpetrators are typically the parents. Parental "consent" is often "coercion."
- Judges have wide discretion to approve even the marriage of a child who is too young to consent to sex.
- Even more robust judicial review process still would put the onus on a child who is being forced to marry to choose whether to be honest with the court and face the repercussions at home, or to lie to the court.
- Children are effectively disempowered through the process, entered into marriages by parents and/or a judge.
- A child is automatically emancipated upon marriage,² which likely ends their parents' financial obligation to them, regardless of the child's level of financial or emotional independence.
- Typically, an adult age 20 or older who has sex with a 15-year-old can be charged with sexual assault – but not if they are married to each other.³ Between 2000 and 2019, at least one and possibly two adults age 20 or older married 15-year-olds⁴ and received a "get out of jail free" card.
- Child marriage encourages and legalizes the trafficking of minors under the guise of marriage.⁵

Devastating Consequences of Child Marriage

- Teens can easily be forced into marriage or forced to stay in a marriage before they turn 18.⁶ Even at 15, 16 or 17, they cannot easily leave home,⁷ enter a domestic violence shelter,⁸ retain an attorney⁹ or bring a legal action including seeking a protective order.¹⁰
- Child marriage destroys girls' health, education and economic opportunities, and increases their risk of experiencing violence.¹¹ **The U.S. State Department has called marriage before 18 a "human rights abuse."**¹²
- Those who marry before 18 have a 70-80% chance of divorcing,¹³ which brings additional instability and hardship.

Alarming Statistics

- 835 minors age 15 to 17 were married in Hawai'i between 2000 and 2022.
- 82% were girls wed to adult men an average of 4 years older.¹⁴

Simple Legislative Solution: HB729 costs nothing, harms no one and saves girls from a human rights abuse: It keeps the marriage age at 18 and eliminates the dangerous loopholes that allow marriage before that age. Other states are passing the same legislation. **More information is at unchainedatlast.org.**

¹ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 572-1, 572-2, 572-9, 572-10.

² Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-25.

³ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 707-730, 707-732.

⁴ 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).

⁵ Federal law (8 U.S. Code § 1101) does not set a minimum age to petition for a foreign spouse or fiancé nor to be the beneficiary of a spousal or fiancé visa – a shameful legal loophole that encourages and allows children in the U.S. to be trafficked for their U.S. citizenship, forced to marry adults from overseas who can then get a U.S. visa and path to citizenship. It also encourages and allows girls from other countries to be trafficked to the U.S. legally, under the guise of marriage. However, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the State Department may approve a spousal or fiancé visa involving a minor only if the marriage would be legal 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 Hawai'i's current marriage-age laws allow 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds in the state to be legally trafficked for their U.S. citizenship, and they allow 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds from overseas to be legally trafficked to Hawai'i.

⁶ Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-1: The age of adulthood is 18.

⁷ Leaving home before 18 is a status offense. See Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 571-2, 571-11(2)(B). See also Hawai'i State Judiciary, *Juvenile Proceedings*, available at https://www.courts.state.hi.us/self-help/juvenile/juvenile_proceedings.

⁸ Unchained has found domestic violence shelters across the U.S. typically do not accept minors who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian because of the potential legal liability minors bring.

⁹ Contracts with minors, including retainer agreements with attorneys, are generally voidable. See Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-1. See also *Jellings v. Pioneer Mill Co.*, 30 Haw. 184, 186-87 (Haw. 1927).

¹⁰ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 551-2, § 587A-16(a). Note that children are automatically emancipated upon marriage and should get the rights listed here, but those rights arrive too late for a child facing a forced marriage.

¹¹ Fraidy Reiss, *Why Can 12-Year-Olds Still Get Married in the United States*, Washington Post (10 February 2017).

¹² <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf>.

¹³ <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2467&context=facpubs>.

¹⁴ Based on marriage-license data Unchained retrieved from the Hawai'i Department of Health.

Testimony in Support of HB729: Relating to Marriage of Minors
Presented to the Hawai'i House Committee on Health | February 5, 2025

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Distinguished Committee Members:

We are a bipartisan group of state legislators who have partnered with the nonprofit group Unchained At Last to end child marriage in our 13 states. We respectfully urge you, our fellow lawmakers, to do the same. End this archaic, sexist practice that destroys girls' lives – even if you get the pushback we got at first.

Marriage before age 18 creates a nightmarish legal trap, even for the most mature 17-year-olds. Minors face overwhelming legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home, enter a confidential shelter, retain an attorney or bring a legal action.

Further, marriage before 18 is recognized as a human rights abuse.¹ It destroys nearly every aspect of American girls' lives, including their health, education economic opportunities² and even their physical safety.³

You probably will get pushback when you try to pass the simple, commonsense legislation we introduced in our states, which eliminated the dangerous loopholes that allowed marriage before age 18. Do not compromise. Do not replace one loophole with another; insist on a marriage age of 18, without exceptions. There is no room for negotiation when you are ending a human rights abuse.

You will hear, as we did at first, from legislators and others whose grandmothers married at 14. Remind them that the world has changed since grandma was a kid.

You will hear arguments about young love. Respond by asking what harm comes to a young couple if they wait a matter of months to marry. Minors must wait until 18 to enter almost any other contract, regardless of how passionately they feel about it.

But what if a girl is pregnant, some will ask you. Let them know we would be harming, not helping, if we married off pregnant girls. Teen mothers in the U.S. who marry are more likely to suffer economic deprivation and instability than teen mothers who stay single.⁴

A teen mother who wants to co-parent with the father of the baby can easily do so outside of marriage. He can simply establish paternity, and his insurance and other benefits would cover the baby. We no longer have illegitimacy laws that punish babies born “out of wedlock.”

Do not be swayed by the religious argument. We do not know of any religion that requires child marriage; actually, every major religion has supported legislation to end child marriage. Besides,

¹ U.S. Department of State, et al., *United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls* (March 2016), <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf>.

² Fraidy Reiss, *Child Marriage in the United States: Prevalence and Implications*, *Journal of Adolescent Health* (December 2021), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X21003414>.

³ Aditi Wahi et al, *The Lived Experience of Child Marriage in the United States*, *Social Work Public Health* (12 February 2019), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30747055>.

⁴ Vivian Hamilton, *The Age of Marital Capacity: Reconsidering Recognition of Adolescent Marriage*, William & Mary Law School Scholarship Repository (2012), <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2467&context=facpubs>.

the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld laws that incidentally forbid an act required by religion, if the laws do not target religious practice.⁵

No, ending child marriage does not impact reproductive rights. The U.S. Supreme Court has established that states should treat minors' abortion differently from minors' marriage, because the former is time sensitive while the latter is not.⁶

And no, do not agree to a loophole that allows emancipated minors to be subjected to a human rights abuse. Emancipation is for teens who cannot be reunited with their parents; it gives them some rights of adulthood so they can fend for themselves. Teens do not need marriage to fend for themselves.

Teens do not need marriage, period. If they are in an abusive home or cannot get health insurance from their parents, they deserve resources that do not require them to enter a contractual sexual relationship.

Under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5.3, the U.S. joined 192 other countries in promising to end child marriage by year 2030.⁷ We have achieved that goal in 13 states so far, despite initial resistance from our colleagues.

Now we call on you, our fellow lawmakers, to join us. Every child in the U.S. is relying on us to keep our promise to the world and end all marriage before 18. No exceptions. No compromises.

Delaware Rep. Kim Williams
Delaware Former Sen. Anthony Delcollo
New Jersey Sen. Nellie Pou
New Jersey Asm. Nancy Munoz
Pennsylvania Rep. Perry Warren
Pennsylvania Rep. Jesse Topper
Pennsylvania Former Sen. John Sabatina
Minnesota Sen. Sandra Pappas
Minnesota Rep. Kaohly Her
Rhode Island Rep. Julie Casimiro
Rhode Island Sen. John Burke
New York Sen. Julia Salazar
New York Asm. Phil Ramos
Massachusetts Rep. Kay Khan
Massachusetts Former Sen. Harriette Chandler
Vermont Rep. Carol Ode
Connecticut Rep. Jillian Gilchrest
Michigan Rep. Kara Hope
Michigan Sen. Sarah Anthony
Washington Rep. Monica Stonier
Washington Sen. Derek Stanford
Virginia Del. Karen Keys-Gamarra

New Hampshire Sen. Debra Altschiller
New Hampshire Rep. Cassandra Levesque

⁵ 494 U.S. 872, *Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith* (No. 88-1213).

⁶ 443 U.S. 622 (1979), *Bellotti v. Baird* (No. 78-329).

⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Sustainable Development* (2015), <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>.

Testimony in Support of HB729: Relating to Marriage of Minors

Presented to the Hawai'i House Committee on Health | February 5, 2025

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Distinguished Committee Members:

The Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), a not-for-profit organization advocating for servicewomen, past, present, and future. We urge you to close the loophole that allows a military exception to the marriage age in Alaska. We urge you to end all marriage before 18, without an exception for servicemembers or any other exceptions. We do not believe that marriage is acceptable under the age of 18 for any reason, including service to our nation. We understand that often the purpose of marriage for servicemembers under the age of 18 is to ensure that if a service member were to lose their life overseas, their spouse would receive full benefits for their service to our nation.

Under the Survivor Benefit Plan, service members can designate a significant other to receive benefits if the service member passes away; the Plan does not require the individuals to be married. Additionally, servicemember' military benefits extend to their children, regardless of the servicemembers' marital status so long as the child is properly recognized as a dependent. Death gratuity is also offered for service members who die while on active duty or while serving in certain reserve statuses. The death gratuity is the same regardless of the cause of death.

The longstanding purpose of the death gratuity has been to provide an immediate cash payment to assist survivors of deceased members of the Armed forces to meet their financial needs during the period immediately following a member's death and before other survivor benefits, if any, become available.

SWAN believes that using marriage for servicemembers leaving to war as a motive to keep marriage before 18 legal in this country is a misinformed stance. Servicemembers who choose to serve our country can select their beneficiaries; therefore, the requirement for marriage is needless.

A secondary consideration is the military health and housing benefits afforded to spouses. Military health and housing benefits through a spouse are not a solution for underage marriage. A child's economic dependency should not justify marriage before 18 years old. Underage marriage can create a long-term level of dependence that increases a spouse's chance of experiencing domestic violence.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our organization for additional information. We appreciate your continued support of our nation's service members and veterans.



February 3, 2025

Aloha House of Representatives,

My testimony is in full support of HB729 to:

- Raise the minimum age to enter into marriage from sixteen (16) to eighteen (18) years of age.
- Rescind the authority of parents and the family court to consent to a minor's marriage.

It's time for Hawaii to end child marriage and join other states that have already taken the step: *Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Rhode Island, New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, Michigan, Washington, Virginia, and New Hampshire, along with American Samoa and the United States Virgin Islands.*

I strongly urge you and members of the committee to **support HB729 to end child marriage**. It's plain and simple to raise the age of marriage to eighteen (18) and to pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Edie Ignacio Neumiller
Zonta Club of Kauai
Past President 2022-2024



**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB729: Relating to Marriage of Minors
Presented to the Hawai'i House Committee on Health
February 5, 2025**

Dear Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Distinguished Committee Members:

Zonta International is a 105-year-old organization that seeks to build a better world for women and girls. The Zonta USA Caucus conducts nonpartisan advocacy for women and girls representing hundreds of Zonta Clubs in the U.S. including clubs in Hawai'i: Hanalei, Hilo, Kauai, and Oahu (formerly Leilehua). **We strongly urge you to vote "YES" on HB729.**

Child Marriage is a Serious Problem: Hawai'i's marriage law has dangerous loopholes allowing 16-and-17-year-olds to marry with parental "consent" and 15-year-olds to marry with parental consent and judicial approval.¹

Dangers in the Current Law

- When a child is forced to marry, the perpetrators are typically the parents. Parental consent is often parental "coercion."
- Judges have wide discretion to approve child marriages, this is dangerous as it allows a child who is too young to consent to sex to marry. Improving the judicial process would still be burdensome on a vulnerable child who is being forced to marry having to decide whether to lie to the court or be honest about coercion and face consequences at home.
- A child is automatically emancipated upon marriage,² which likely ends their parents' financial obligation of them, regardless of the child's level of financial security.
- If an adult aged 20 or older has sex with a 15-year-old, they can be charged with sexual assault – but not if they are married to each other.³ This is a get out of jail free card.
- 835 minors aged 15 to 17 were married in Hawai'i between 2000 and 2022. Of these, 82% were girls married to adult men that were on average 4 years older.⁴

Devastating Lifetime Consequences of Child Marriage

- Child marriage destroys every aspect of a child's life: health, education, economic opportunities, freedom, physical safety, and increases their risk of experiencing violence.⁵ **The U.S. State Department calls all marriages before 18 a "human rights abuse."**⁶
- Teens can easily be forced into marriage or forced to stay in a marriage before they turn 18.⁷ Even at 15, 16, or 17, they cannot easily leave home,⁸ enter a domestic violence

¹ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 572-1, 572-2, 572-9, 572-10.

² Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-25.

³ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 707-730, 707-732.

⁴ Based on marriage-license data Unchained at Last retrieved from the Hawai'i Department of Health.

⁵ Fraidy Reiss, Why Can 12-Year-Olds Still Get Married in the United States, Washington Post (10 February 2017).

⁶ <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf>.

⁷ Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-1: The age of adulthood is 18.

⁸ Leaving home before 18 is a status offense. See Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 571-2, 571-11(2)(B).

shelter, retain an attorney,⁹ or bring a legal action including divorce or seeking a protective order.¹⁰

- Marriage before 18 results in divorce 70% to 80% of the time.¹¹

Simple Legislative Solution: **HB729** costs nothing, harms no one and saves girls from a human rights abuse. **Passing HB729** keeps the marriage age at 18 and eliminates the dangerous loopholes that allow marriage before that age. Other states are passing the same legislation.

Learn more at: www.unchainedatlast.org

Zonta USA Caucus engages in non-partisan advocacy to build a better world for women and girls. You can make a difference in the lives of children by ending child marriage.

Respectfully,

Zonta USA Caucus

<https://zontausa.org/>

hello@zontausa.org

Zonta International District 1

Zonta International District 2

Zonta International District 3

Zonta International District 4

Zonta International District 5

Zonta International District 6

Zonta International District 7

Zonta International District 8

Zonta International District 9

- Zonta Club of Hanalei
- Zonta Club of Hilo
- Zonta Club of Kauai
- Zonta Club of Oahu (formerly Leilehua)

Zonta International District 10

Zonta International District 11

Zonta International District 12

Zonta International District 15

⁹ Contracts with minors, including retainer agreements with attorneys, are generally voidable. See Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-1. See also *Jellings v. Pioneer Mill Co.*, 30 Haw. 184, 186-87 (Haw. 1927).

¹⁰ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 551-2, § 587A-16(a). Note that children are automatically emancipated upon marriage and should get the rights listed here, but those rights arrive too late for a child facing a forced marriage.

¹¹ <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2467&context=facpubs>.



Testimony in Support of HB729: Relating to Marriage of Minors

Presented to the Hawai'i House Committee on Health | February 5, 2025

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Distinguished Committee Members:

Protect Our Defenders is the pre-eminent national human rights organization dedicated to ending sexual violence, victim retaliation, misogyny, sexual prejudice, and racism in the military and combating a culture that has allowed it to persist. We honor, support, and give voice to survivors of military sexual violence. We seek reform to ensure all service members are provided a safe and respectful work environment free from misogyny and racism, and have access to a fair, impartially administered system of justice.

In order to fulfill our mission, we provide pro bono legal services to survivors of military sexual assault, advocate for military sexual assault reform, and publish and proliferate ground-breaking reports that expose the crises of sexual assault and racial discrimination in the military. Since our founding in 2011, we have assisted a number of child victims of military sexual assault and their families, who are left devastated following incidents that no child should ever have to endure. In FY 2020 alone, the DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) reported that there were 209 unique victims of child sexual abuse, 92.3% of which were female, and 7.7% were male.¹

When it came to our attention that some lawmakers have resisted ending child marriage so that an active duty servicemember might be able to marry a child for the child to be able to benefit from spousal death benefits, we were left deeply shaken. The military has a crisis on its hands in the form of sexual assault, which has been acknowledged by the Secretary of Defense², military leaders such as General Mark Milley³, and the Commander in Chief, President Joe Biden⁴.

¹ Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, Fiscal Year 2020, Appendix H: Child Sexual Abuse; https://www.sapr.mil/sites/default/files/Appendix_H_Child_Sexual_Abuse_FY2020.pdf

² Lolita C. Baldor, "SECDEF backs change in military sex assault prosecution," *Military Times*, June 22, 2021; <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2021/06/22/secdef-backs-change-in-military-sex-assaultprosecution/>

³ Missy Ryan and Dan Lamothe, "'We haven't moved the needle' on sexual assault in the military, general says," *The Washington Post*, May 6, 2021; https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/military-sexualassault/2021/05/06/a8f51a7c-ae98-11eb-8109-f8ba1ea2eeab_story.html

⁴ Andrew Solender, "Joe Biden Says He Would Take A Hard Line on Military Sexual Assault," *Forbes*, April 29, 2020; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewsolender/2020/04/29/joe-biden-says-he-would-take-a-hard-line-onmilitary-sexual-assault/?sh=ec2ef7678629>

Protect Our Defenders | 950 N. Washington Street, Suite 234, Alexandria, VA 22314 | (703) 639-0396 www.protectourdefenders.com

Recognized by GuideStar with Platinum Seal, and the Catalogue for Philanthropy, Washington D.C

Protect our Defenders Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3). Our Federal EIN number is 45-4044997

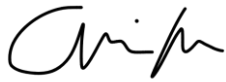


Allowing for the perpetuation of child marriage under the guise that children stand to benefit is a fallacy. Under the Survivor Benefit Plan, servicemembers have the ability to designate a recipient for their death benefits, and that recipient is NOT limited only to spouses, thus enabling a servicemember to designate their benefits to whomever he or she desires.

We fear that continuing to proliferate the narrative that a servicemember should be allowed to marry children to ensure that child receives spousal benefits will enable those to wish to prey on children to do so under the guise of a legal union. This is very dangerous in any profession and in any setting, but especially within the U.S. military, which is already contending with a sexual assault crisis it cannot control.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very Respectfully,



Col Don Christensen, USAF (Ret)
President, Protect Our Defenders

Protect Our Defenders | 950 N. Washington Street, Suite 234, Alexandria, VA 22314 | (703) 639-0396 www.protectourdefenders.com

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February 3, 2025

Representative Gregg Takayama
Chair, Committee on Health
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 404
Honolulu, HI 96813
Via Email: reptakayama@capitol.hawaii.gov

Re: H.B. No. 729 - Relating to the Marriage of Minors - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Takayama and distinguished Committee Members,

On behalf of Equality Now, I urge lawmakers to end child marriage in the state of Hawaii by increasing the legal age for marriage to 18 years, with no exceptions.

Equality Now is an international human rights organization working to protect and promote the human rights of all women and girls around the world. For over 30 years, Equality Now has partnered with international and civil society organizations, in the United States and globally, to strengthen laws and policies to advance gender equality and combat violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, sexual exploitation, and harmful practices.¹

Child marriage, defined as marriage before the age of 18 by international law, is recognized internationally as a violation of human rights, a form of violence against women and girls, and a harmful cultural practice that threatens the lives, well-being, and futures of girls and adolescents around the world.² Each year, 12 million girls globally are married before they become legal adults, most often to adult men many years their senior.³

¹ Equality Now, <https://www.equalitynow.org>

² International treaties and accompanying General Recommendations, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, recognize child marriage as a violation of fundamental human rights. *See also*, Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: United States Government's Response, USAID,

<https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/child-early-and-forced-marriage-usg-response> (last visited Oct. 16, 2024);

U.S. Department of State, et al., United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls (2024),

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/US-Global-Strategy-to-Empower-Adolescent-Girls-2024.pdf>

³ *Where it happens*, Girls Not Brides, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/where-child-marriage-happens/> (last visited Oct 16, 2024).

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In the United States, nearly 300,000 children—primarily girls—were legally married between 2000 and 2018.⁴ A majority of the girls married were older adolescents, but others were as young as 12 years old. **In Hawaii alone, approximately 835 minors were married between 2000 and 2022.**⁵ Of these, records from the Hawaii Department of Health show that 82% of children married between 2000 - 2022 were girls married to adult men.

The devastating consequences of child marriage for women and girls are well documented,⁶ including in the United States. Like their counterparts in other countries, girls in the United States who are married before age 18 experience detrimental consequences even as adults. They report high rates of physical, sexual, financial, and/or emotional abuse during their marriages, as well as early and/or unplanned pregnancies and poor mental and physical health.⁷ Child marriage disrupts education and limits economic attainment, trapping girls in a cycle of poverty with little chance of becoming economically independent or secure.⁸ Girls who marry are more likely to drop out of high school, earn less over their lifetimes, and live in poverty than their peers who marry at later ages.⁹ Moreover, child marriage can easily result in the loss of bodily autonomy and reproductive rights, with survivors forced to have sex and endure pregnancy and childbirth without their consent.

International law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the United States has ratified, requires the consent of both parties to the marriage. The United Nations Human Rights Committee thereby recommended the United States in December 2023 to “adopt measures at all levels in order to prohibit marriage under the age of 18.”¹⁰

According to a recent UN Women report, as of 2019, girls in 93 countries were legally allowed to marry before the age of 18 with parental consent.¹¹ **This includes girls who live in Hawaii, where 15 year olds can marry a person of any age with the consent of a parent or guardian, and the written approval of a family court judge. Moreover, 16 and 17 year olds only need the consent of a parent, guardian, or family court to marry.** While many policymakers believe consent requirements protect girls against manipulation, coercion, poor decisions, or

⁴ Fraidy Reiss, *Child Marriage in the United States: Prevalence and Implications*, J. Adolescent Health (Dec. 2021), [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(21\)00341-4/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(21)00341-4/fulltext); see also, Steinhaus & Thompson, (2020). *No Exceptions: A Synthesis of Evidence on the Prevalence and Impact of Child and Early Marriage in the United States and How This Compares to Existing Global Evidence*, International Center for Research on Women.

⁵ Reiss, *supra* note 3; Child Marriage in Hawaii., Unchained at Last, <https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-in-hawaii/> (last visited Feb. 3, 2025). Data for 2019 and later based on Unchained’s analysis of marriage-certificate data from the Hawaii Department of Health.

⁶ See, Banyan Global, & International Center for Research on Women, *Child, early, and forced marriage resource guide* (2015), https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/USAID_CEFM_Resource-Guide.PDF; see also, Rachel Kidman, *Child Marriage and Intimate Partner Violence: A Comparative Study of 34 Countries*, Int’l J. Epidemiology (2017), <https://academic.oup.com/ije/article/46/2/662/2417355>.

⁷ See, Steinhaus & Thompson, *supra* note 3; Aditi Wahi et al., *The Lived Experience of Child Marriage in the United States*, Soc. Work Pub. Health (2019), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30747055>.

⁸ See, e.g., G. B. Dahl, *Early Teen Marriage and Future Poverty*, Demography, 47(3), 689–718 (2010), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3000061/>.

⁹ Steinhaus & Thompson, *supra* at note 3.

¹⁰ UN Human Rights Committee, *Concluding Observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of the United States of America*, CCPR/C/USA/CO/5 (Dec. 7, 2023).

¹¹ UN Women et al., *Legislating and Enforcing the Minimum Age of Marriage* (2023), <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/legislating-and-enforcing-the-minimum-age-of-marriage-a-comparative-study-of-experiences-and-lessons-learned-en.pdf>.

other harms, survivors of child marriage tell us otherwise.¹² In fact, in many cases, it is a parent or parents who are pressuring the child to marry—whether for cultural or economic reasons, to legitimize a teen pregnancy, or to cover up sexual abuse.

Even “voluntary” marriages involving minors risk significant harm to girls, given the child’s level of emotional, mental, and physical development, and the power differential inherent in most child marriages. As reported by the International Center on Research on Women in 2020, “the U.S. is not unique—there is no evidence to support the claim that child marriage in the U.S. is protective for girls [because of parental or judicial consent requirements] or that it results in better outcomes for these new families. Instead, the evidence shows that remaining unmarried, even in the case of pregnancy, has better outcomes for teen mothers and their children.”¹³

Regardless of where in the world she lives, child marriage deprives a girl of a future in which she can reach her full potential and furthers a dangerous cycle of poverty, oppression, and harm. Consent provisions in marriage laws fail to protect girls in most cases and even serve to legitimize statutory rape.

Equality Now strongly supports H.B. No. 729, which would set the legal age of marriage in Hawaii at 18, without exceptions, consistent with international human rights law and standards. We urge the Committee to take action to end this extremely harmful practice in the state and respectfully request your Aye vote.

Sincerely,



Anastasia Law
Program Officer for North America
Equality Now

¹² See, e.g., Tahirih Justice, *Survivor Story Compilation* (2019), <https://www.tahirih.org/pubs/child-marriage-in-the-u-s-survivor-story-compilation>; Unchained at Last, *Survivor Stories*, <https://www.unchainedatlast.org/forced-and-child-marriage-survivor-stories/>.

¹³ Steinhaus and Thompson, *supra* at note 3, at 3.

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 5:08:53 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
André D. Fields	Unchained At Last	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

- Forced marriage destroys nearly every aspect of an American girl’s life:
 - Health: Increased likelihood of physical and sexual violence.
 - Education: Often forced to leave school, cutting off future opportunities.
 - Economic opportunities: Loss of financial independence and career prospects.
 - Physical safety: Greater risk of physical and sexual violence.
- Girls are more likely to:
 - Lose reproductive and sexual rights.
 - Be forced to endure pregnancy, childbirth, and parenthood without their consent.
- For ALL THESE reasons, the U.S. State Department calls child marriage a human rights abuse.



Zonta Club of Hilo Foundation
P.O. Box 1915 • Hilo, HI 96721
foundation@zontahilo.org
www.ZontaHilo.org

Barbara Hastings
President

February 4, 2025

Wilma Matsumura
Vice-President

Testimony in Full Support of HB729, Relating to Marriage of Minors

House of Representatives Committee on Health Hearing

Laurie Higashi
Secretary

Wednesday, February 5, 2025 at 9:30 am in Conference Room 329

Julie Mitchell
Treasurer

Dear Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Lee-Loy, and Committee Members:

Charlene Iboshi
Director

Child marriage, or marriage before age 18, was legal in all 50 U.S. states as of 2017.

Julie Tulang
Director &
Club President

Thanks to the advocacy of groups like Zonta International, UNICEF, and Unchained at Last, that is changing. Delaware and New Jersey in 2018 became the first two states to end this human rights abuse, followed by American Samoa in 2018, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Pennsylvania and Minnesota in 2020, Rhode Island and New York in 2021, Massachusetts in 2022 Vermont, Connecticut and Michigan in 2023, and Washington, Virginia, and New Hampshire in 2024.

Julie Tulang
Fundraising
Committee Chair

However, child marriage remains legal in 37 states – including Hawai'i – and is happening in the U.S. at an alarming rate. More than 300,000 children as young as 10 were married in the U.S. since 2000 – mostly girls wed to adult men. According to the Hawai'i State Department of Health data, at least 800 children have been married in Hawai'i since 2000, with 80% girls wed to adult men.

Here are the four main reasons we must end child marriage in the U.S. and Hawai'i:

1. Child marriage can easily be forced marriage. The age of majority, when children become legal adults and get the rights of adulthood, is 18 or higher in every U.S. state. Children who have not yet reached the age of majority have limited legal rights and therefore can easily be forced into marriage or forced to stay in a marriage. They face overwhelming legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home to escape a forced marriage, get help from an advocate, enter a domestic violence shelter, or retain an attorney.

Perhaps most shockingly, children typically are not allowed to initiate a legal proceeding – such as seeking a protective order or even filing for divorce – unless they act through a guardian or other representative. This outrageous legal setup puts the “lock” in “wedlock.” The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights categorizes all child marriage as forced marriage.

2. Child marriage destroys nearly every aspect of American children's lives, including their health, education, and economic opportunities. It even undermines their physical safety. Individuals in the U.S. who were married before age 18 report high rates of



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physical, sexual, financial, or emotional abuse during their marriage as well as unwanted or unplanned pregnancies.

And the impacts of underage marriage are even more severe for teen mothers. Teen mothers who marry and then divorce are more likely to suffer economic deprivation and instability than teen mothers who stay single – and marriage before age 18 has a 70-80% divorce rate.

Child marriage is recognized globally as a harmful practice that disempowers women and girls in particular and hinders gender equality. The U.S. State Department has called child marriage a human rights abuse.

3. Child marriage undermines statutory rape laws. In most states and under federal law, sex with a child that would otherwise be considered rape – in some cases, felony rape – becomes legal within marriage. In those situations, the marriage license becomes a “get out of jail free” card for a child rapist.

In some states, statutory rape remains a crime within marriage. The marriage is legal, but sex within the marriage is rape. In those situations, the state that issues the marriage license sends a child home to be raped.

At least 60,000 child marriages in the U.S. since 2000 occurred at an age or with a spousal age difference that should have been considered a sex crime. Of those child marriages, 88% gave a rapist a “get out of jail free” card, while 12% sent a child home to be raped. Either way, the marriage license made a mockery of statutory rape laws.

4. Child marriage can also be a form of human trafficking. Due to loopholes in immigration laws, thousands of American girls are being trafficked legally for their citizenship, forced to marry adult men from overseas so the men can get a U.S. visa. Similarly, American men are legally importing child brides from overseas.

Join the movement to end child marriage in the U.S. **Please pass HB729 and make Hawai‘i the fourteenth state to legally ban child marriage.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Barbara A. Hastings'.

Barbara Hastings
Foundation President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Julie Tulang'.

Julie Tulang
Club President



BREAKING THE SILENCE
PROTECTING LIBERTY
CELEBRATING DIGNITY

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB729: ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN HAWAI'I
PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH ON FEBRUARY 5, 2025

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Distinguished Committee Members:

AHA Foundation wishes to be recorded in strong support of HB729. AHA Foundation thanks the introducers of this bill for their efforts, and the Committee for prioritizing a hearing on this important legislation.

The marriage age is 18, but dangerous loopholes allow 16- and 17-year-olds to marry with parental "consent" and 15-year-olds to marry with parental consent and judicial approval. HB729 eliminates these dangerous loopholes, and ensures minors cannot be exploited or abused under the guise of marriage.

Minors, having not yet reached the age of majority, can easily be forced into marriage or trapped in an abusive marriage in which they are forced to stay. Minors being coerced into marriage may fear familial violence should they refuse to comply, or they may be physically or emotionally manipulated into an unwanted marriage. Because they have not yet reached the legal age of majority, minors face significant legal and practical barriers if they try to leave home, enter a domestic violence shelter, retain an attorney, or file a legal action such as a divorce.

AHA Foundation has worked with victims, including minors, facing forced marriage, and knows full well that these barriers are grounded in reality. The individual stories we have seen are also supported by the data. Between 2000 and 2022, approximately 835 minors age 15 to 17 were married in Hawai'i. Between these years, at least 82% percent of the children married were minor girls wed to adult men.¹

Child marriage severely limits opportunities in health, education and economic freedom. It also increases risk of domestic violence. Given these harms, one case of child marriage is one too many. If mechanisms are in place that allow for hundreds of cases to slip through the cracks, the common sense solution is to enact the necessary law to close these gaps.

Governments should not participate in child marriage or make it legally possible for parents to force minors to marry. Those at risk must be protected by a legal framework that guarantees their human rights. The solution is simple: eliminate the dangerous loophole in the marriage laws that place the children of the Hawai'i at risk of exploitation and abuse and **vote YES on HB729**.

¹ Based on the nonprofit Unchained At Last's analysis of marriage-certificate data from the Hawai'i Department of Health.



BREAKING THE SILENCE
PROTECTING LIBERTY
CELEBRATING DIGNITY

About AHA Foundation

AHA Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit founded by women's rights activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and is the leading organization working to end honor violence that shames, hurts or kills thousands of women and girls in the U.S. each year, and puts millions more at risk. We ensure that women and girls of all races, cultures, religions, beliefs and backgrounds who are facing honor violence have a way out, and that survivors get the help they need to thrive.

Since 2010, the Foundation's programs include: 1) compiling data on these crimes, which are not currently tracked by U.S. law enforcement or government agencies, 2) publishing reports and articles and organizing conferences about the continued oppression of women and girls in the U.S., 3) outreach and education to expand and strengthen state and national legislation for the protection of women and girls, 4) training of law enforcement and service providers, and 5) connecting women and girls in crisis to appropriate services. AHA Foundation has trained over 3,400 frontline service providers on responding to cases of gender based violence, honor violence and forced marriage, and partnered with Crisis Text Line to create America's first honor violence and forced marriage helpline.

Testimony in Support of HB729: Relating to Marriage of Minors Presented to the Hawai'i House Committee on Health | February 5, 2025

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Distinguished Committee Members:

Unchained At Last is the only organization dedicated to ending forced and child marriage in Hawai'i and across the U.S. through direct services and advocacy. **Unchained urges you to vote "YES" on HB729.**

Child Marriage Is a Serious Problem: The marriage age is 18, but dangerous loopholes allow 16- and 17-year-olds to marry with parental "consent" and 15-year-olds to marry with parental consent and judicial approval.¹

Dangers in the Current Law

- When a child is forced to marry, the perpetrators are typically the parents. Parental "consent" is often "coercion."
- Judges have wide discretion to approve even the marriage of a child who is too young to consent to sex.
- Even more robust judicial review process still would put the onus on a child who is being forced to marry to choose whether to be honest with the court and face the repercussions at home, or to lie to the court.
- Children are effectively disempowered through the process, entered into marriages by parents and/or a judge.
- A child is automatically emancipated upon marriage,² which likely ends their parents' financial obligation to them, regardless of the child's level of financial or emotional independence.
- Typically, an adult age 20 or older who has sex with a 15-year-old can be charged with sexual assault – but not if they are married to each other.³ Between 2000 and 2019, at least one and possibly two adults age 20 or older married 15-year-olds⁴ and received a "get out of jail free" card.
- Child marriage encourages and legalizes the trafficking of minors under the guise of marriage.⁵

Devastating Consequences of Child Marriage

- Teens can easily be forced into marriage or forced to stay in a marriage before they turn 18.⁶ Even at 15, 16 or 17, they cannot easily leave home,⁷ enter a domestic violence shelter,⁸ retain an attorney⁹ or bring a legal action including seeking a protective order.¹⁰
- Child marriage destroys girls' health, education and economic opportunities, and increases their risk of experiencing violence.¹¹ **The U.S. State Department has called marriage before 18 a "human rights abuse."**¹²
- Those who marry before 18 have a 70-80% chance of divorcing,¹³ which brings additional instability and hardship.

Alarming Statistics

- 835 minors age 15 to 17 were married in Hawai'i between 2000 and 2022.
- 82% were girls wed to adult men an average of 4 years older.¹⁴

Simple Legislative Solution: HB729 costs nothing, harms no one and saves girls from a human rights abuse: It keeps the marriage age at 18 and eliminates the dangerous loopholes that allow marriage before that age. Other states are passing the same legislation. **More information is at unchainedatlast.org.**

¹ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 572-1, 572-2, 572-9, 572-10.

² Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-25.

³ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 707-730, 707-732.

⁴ 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).

⁵ Federal law (8 U.S. Code § 1101) does not set a minimum age to petition for a foreign spouse or fiancé nor to be the beneficiary of a spousal or fiancé visa – a shameful legal loophole that encourages and allows children in the U.S. to be trafficked for their U.S. citizenship, forced to marry adults from overseas who can then get a U.S. visa and path to citizenship. It also encourages and allows girls from other countries to be trafficked to the U.S. legally, under the guise of marriage. However, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the State Department may approve a spousal or fiancé visa involving a minor only if the marriage would be legal 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 Hawai'i's current marriage-age laws allow 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds in the state to be legally trafficked for their U.S. citizenship, and they allow 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds from overseas to be legally trafficked to Hawai'i.

⁶ Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-1: The age of adulthood is 18.

⁷ Leaving home before 18 is a status offense. See Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 571-2, 571-11(2)(B). See also Hawai'i State Judiciary, *Juvenile Proceedings*, available at https://www.courts.state.hi.us/self-help/juvenile/juvenile_proceedings.

⁸ Unchained has found domestic violence shelters across the U.S. typically do not accept minors who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian because of the potential legal liability minors bring.

⁹ Contracts with minors, including retainer agreements with attorneys, are generally voidable. See Haw. Rev. Stat. § 577-1. See also *Jellings v. Pioneer Mill Co.*, 30 Haw. 184, 186-87 (Haw. 1927).

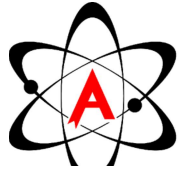
¹⁰ Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 551-2, § 587A-16(a). Note that children are automatically emancipated upon marriage and should get the rights listed here, but those rights arrive too late for a child facing a forced marriage.

¹¹ Fraidy Reiss, *Why Can 12-Year-Olds Still Get Married in the United States*, Washington Post (10 February 2017).

¹² <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf>.

¹³ <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2467&context=facpubs>.

¹⁴ Based on marriage-license data Unchained retrieved from the Hawai'i Department of Health.



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

February 5, 2025

The Honorable Rep. Gregg Takayama
Chair, House Committee on Health
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: SUPPORT HB 729, Ending Child Marriage

Dear Chairperson Takayama and Members of the House Committee on Health:

American Atheists, on behalf of its constituents in Hawaii, thanks you for holding a hearing on HB 279, a bill to protect young people by ending child marriage. This bill would protect children from being coerced into marriage against their will, a harmful and archaic practice that happens all too frequently across the country. We urge you to support this necessary legislation.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the “wall of separation” between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheism and atheists are accepted as members of our nation’s communities and where casual bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. American Atheists believes that children should never be coerced into marriage, especially due to the religious beliefs of their parents or guardians.

Currently, Hawaii allows children as young as fifteen to marry with judicial consent. Appallingly, there are no guardrails in place to protect children from forced marriage so long as both parties are over the age of sixteen and they obtain parental consent. These loopholes invite abuse and endanger young people in Hawaii. Over 800 children were married in Hawaii between 2000 and 2022, including at least one marriage in which the age difference between the child and their spouse would otherwise be considered child abuse or statutory rape.¹ This means the current loopholes in state law have allowed criminal conduct against children in Hawaii. These loopholes must be closed immediately to prevent further harm.

¹ *Child Marriage in Hawaii*. Unchained At Last. (2025). Available at:
<https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-in-hawaii>.

The harm caused by child marriage cannot be understated. Young people who marry before the age of eighteen are significantly more likely to experience disastrous health, education, and economic outcomes and have a heightened risk of experiencing violence. They have a 70- to 80-percent chance of getting divorced, and teen mothers who marry and then divorce are much more likely to end up in poverty than teen mothers who remain single.² Even if the marriage does not end in divorce, child brides are more likely to drop out of high school, less likely to attend college, and often spend their lives in poverty.³ Requiring that every person must be eighteen years old before getting married means that hundreds of children in Hawaii will be spared the heartbreaking consequences of child marriage.

The fact that a family court or a minor's parent or guardian consents to the marriage does not provide sufficient protection against entering a marriage the child may never be able to leave. In fact, one of the main reasons a child is compelled into marriage is because of parental coercion. Children experiencing teen pregnancy and financial instability, for example, are at risk of being coerced into entering a marriage they do not want by their parents.⁴ When this happens, the children face overwhelming legal and practical barriers to escaping the marriage because, as minors, they are unable to access many of the resources that are available to adults, including domestic violence shelters or even retaining a divorce attorney. Requiring judicial or parental consent is not a safeguard against the potentially horrific outcomes associated with child marriage. On the contrary, it provides a legal mechanism for parents and guardians to irreversibly limit the rights of vulnerable children.

Enacting HB 729 would close the dangerous loopholes that currently exist and ensure children throughout Hawaii can no longer be placed in harm's way. We strongly urge you to advance this bill and protect young people from coerced marriage. Should you have any questions regarding American Atheists' support for HB 729, please contact me at vanderson@atheists.org.

Sincerely,



Victoria Anderson
State Policy Counsel
American Atheists

² Hamilton, Vivian E., "The Age of Marital Capacity: Reconsidering Civil Recognition of Adolescent Marriage" (2012). *William & Mary Law School Scholarship Repository, Faculty Publications*, 1430. Available at <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2467&context=facpubs>.

³ Fraidy Reiss, "Child Marriage in the United States: Prevalence and Implications" (2021). *Journal of Adolescent Health*. Available at: [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(21\)00341-4/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(21)00341-4/fulltext).

⁴ Paige Cassidy and Tyehimba Turner, "The Fight Continues to End Child Marriage in the U.S." (2021). *UNICEF USA*. Available at: <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/fight-continues-end-child-marriage-us>.

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 1:07:54 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Benkert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is estimated that 640 million women alive today were married as girls. Child brides are often pulled out of school and are at a greater risk of violence, being trapped in poverty and serious health complications or even death due to early pregnancy.

- Globally, one in every five girls is formally married or in an informal union, before reaching age 18. In the least developed countries, that number almost doubles – 36% of girls are married before age 18, and 10% of girls are married before age 15.
- Girls with no education are three times as likely to marry by 18 as those with a secondary or higher education.
- 90% of adolescent pregnancies in the developing world are to girls who are already married.
- Girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are twice as likely to die in childbirth as women in their 20s, and newborn children of younger mothers face greater risks of dying.
- Early marriage doubles a teenager’s chances of living in poverty and triples the likelihood she will be beaten by her spouse, compared to married adults

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 3:24:11 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brittany Wright	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy and Distinguished Committee Members:

I am survivor of forced child marriage in the United States. Like many survivors, my story is one of horrible abuse at the hands of an adult man who groomed me at 14-years-old, took me across state lines without the consent of my gaurdians, and when i was recovered by the police my parents forced me into a marriage to him. I escaped at 18 leaving me homeless for over a year. I later earned my GED at 21 years-old and joined the Army where i served 7 years.

Child marriage stole my childhood. Child marraige gave an adult man permission to abuse me and walk away from a number of criminal charges with a child bride. He later married another girl, making it his FOURTH.

Please consider the repercussions of allowing child marriage to continue. No parent should have the right to force thier own child into a horrific situation that destroys every aspect of a young girls life. No adult should be entitled to a child bride under any circumstances.

Let women choose who to marry when they are a legal ADULT.

Vote yes on HB729: and make the legal minimum for marriage 18 with NO EXCEPTIONS!

Brittany (Bee) Wright

HB-729

Submitted on: 1/31/2025 4:27:35 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dara Carlin, M.A.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Stand in strong support

To: Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Lee-Loy, and Committee Members
For: House Committee on Health Hearing on Wednesday, February 5, 2025 at 9:30 am
Re: Strong Support of HB729, Relating to Marriage of Minors

Did you know that child marriage is happening right here in the United States?

UNICEF USA and Zonta International have joined forces to raise awareness and enact change to end child marriage globally and locally, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that girls fully enjoy their childhood free from the risk of child marriage.

I stand for the rights of all children to live a life free from violence and exploitation. I believe that these rights extend to children who may be forced into marriage right here in our state. This is why I support the passage of legislation to make 18 years old the minimum age of marriage in our state, with zero exceptions. As your constituent, I urge you to do the same.

Worldwide, more than 640 million women and girls alive today were married before their 18th birthday, some are right here in the United States. Nearly 300,000 children — some as young as 10 — were married in the U.S. between 2000 and 2018, most of them girls wed to adult men. Yet there is no federal law regarding child marriage; rather, every state sets its own requirements. In fact, several states throughout the country have no minimum age for marriage. UNICEF calls child marriage a harmful practice and a violation of child rights and states that marriage under age 18 should be prohibited in all circumstances.

In all cases, child marriage has negative impacts on children. It leads to separation from family and friends, lack of freedom to interact with peers and participate in community activities, and decreased opportunities for education and economic participation. Because child marriage often results in child pregnancy, girls married at a young age face serious health risks. Teenage girls are much more likely to die in pregnancy and childbirth than women in their twenties. In addition, childhood pregnancy increases risks of nutritional deficiencies for both mother and baby, with permanent consequences.

These risks are just as real for child marriages in the United States as they are in low- and middle-income countries. For the sake of protecting children from abuse and protecting their futures, I believe that every single U.S. state must take legislative steps to ban child marriage.

Based on Department of Health data, at least 800 children have been married in Hawai'i since 2000, with 80% of these marriages girls wed to adult men.

Currently, only 13 U.S. states – Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington – prohibit child marriage with no exceptions. Let's make our state the 14th!

Please support HB729 and end child marriage in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Julie Mitchell
P.O. Box 139
Kurtistown, HI 96760-0139

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 7:17:04 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sara Tasneem	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony in Support of HB729: HB RELATING TO MARRIAGE OF MINORS

Dear Committee Members;

I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB729.

My name is Sara Tasneem, and I am a survivor of forced child marriage. 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. As a survivor I share my story to highlight the harms that minors go through when forced into marriages that they cannot escape from.

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 Hawaii would want to continue these harms and expose minors to a human rights abuse.

Respectfully,

Sara Tasneem

Survivor / Advocate

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 2:05:29 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandi Dredge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good morning. My name is Brandi Dredge. I am an author, a teen mom, a child marriage, domestic violence, and sex crime survivor, who proudly stands here today with Unchained at Last and my fellow members of The National Coalition to End Child Marriage as a survivor ally.

When I was sixteen, I met a twenty-four-year-old man, whom some boys in my high school lived with, and with stars in my teenage eyes, I believed he hung the moon. Four months later, I was pregnant, and a year after that, I was begging my mom to give parental consent for me and my boyfriend to get married after the attorney representing him on criminal theft charges suggested we do so before the sentencing. Since my boyfriend was a persistent and prior felon, the attorney wanted to use the marriage in the arguments for leniency on his sentence to show the judge he was a changed man, a family man with a new wife and baby. In 1997, at seventeen, I became his bride; he was twenty-five.

Over the next nine years, the statistics surrounding child marriage, such as the high likelihood of poverty, lack of further education, and enduring many forms of abuse, would ring true in my marriage in addition to the fact that I had married my rapist which was something I struggled to see even after the sheriff leading the sex crime investigation said the only difference between me and the other girls he had sexually abused was that he married me, and I had evidence of the crime, our son's DNA. In 2007, we got divorced, and he was convicted of two counts of statutory rape. One of those counts of statutory rape is for the crime he committed against me.

It has taken me a lot of years to finally see, accept, and say I am a child marriage, domestic violence, and sex crime survivor. I lost my childhood, and along the way, I lost myself. I rationalized many bad things under the guise of marriage; I couldn't see them as clearly as the sheriff, the prosecutor, and the judge could, which is why I am here today. To help others see what I couldn't.

Fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen-year-olds are children, too.

Times change. When we know better, we do better, and there are children the current marital law doesn't protect. We know this, and we can't rationalize and/or ignore this. We must stand by the truth and lead with common sense: our children are children until they reach the age of majority, the age defined by the state when a person gains all the legal rights and responsibilities as an adult. So, in 2025, let's do better, close the loopholes, lead with common sense, and protect all

our children by declaring that children shouldn't be married before they reach the age of eighteen, no matter what.

Thank you for your time.

Brandi Dredge

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 6:48:03 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ismari Figueroa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In 1989, I was 15 when I met my soon to be husband who was 22. I was an easy target as from age 5 I had been physically and verbally abused by my parents. I had learned that if I said 'no' to an adult meant I would be beaten. Hence, I had no practice saying no and no practice standing up for myself. When he asked me on a date, I wanted to say no but I didn't know how to. Instead, I told him that he needed to ask my mom for permission. I naively believed she would protect me and say no. Instead, she said yes.

Around six months after meeting him, he asked to marry me. I automatically said 'yes' because of my upbringing even though I wanted to say no. A few weeks later I told him 'no'. I explained that I was still in high school and that I was too young. But he said that did not matter. He ignored my decision.

I confided in a friend that I did not want to get married and could she speak to him. I reached out to my mom and told her I did not want to get married. However she determined that as a 16 year old I could make this decision and left it up to me. I believed I had to marry him because I had no choice and no other recourse.

Even though I lived in California I was not married in the state because it would have required a judge's approval. Instead on June 15, 1990 I was driven to Reno, Nevada as at the time a 16 year old could marry a 23 year old with parental approval. Having laws against underage marriage would have protected me from spousal abuse and rape. At the county clerk's office, there should have been resources to assist me as two adults were forcing me to marry against my will. I should have been protected from being forced into marriage before I was ready.

HB-729

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 3:49:56 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/5/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Barbara Adams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Barbara Adams

Age 63

State of Georgia

I was married at the age of 16. I am now 63 years old. After many years of suffering, grieving and processing through my past, I am just now learning how to be an adult in the world and be accountable and responsible for myself. To get to know myself and love myself truly and unconditionally as a person and a feminine. I became a wife and mother before I became a fully recognized person in my own eyes which is a vital and absolutely necessary part of "growing up ". So many rights of passage, I missed in my life up until now. Even now, I struggle almost on a daily basis to show up and be present. Please understand that the commitments of marriage is not something some 16 year olds can comprehend. Becoming a wife or husband should be reserved for those that can decide and choose clearly and carefully based on facts, on what is best for them as an individual first. Maturity is essential, it has to be! Often times some of us became parents before we even knew how to finish raising ourselves, much less another human being to a responsible level, while also being able to participate in our own lives and the lives of our family members. As a result, we tried to just survive the best we could. This all can (and in my case did) result in dysfunction and failure to thrive. Please reconsider this all and uphold a higher age and maturity. Personally I think a minimum of 30 years old, yet that is surely unrealistic in some parts of the world where culture and history dominates and lays foundation for much younger.

Thank you for reading this and considering my testimony.

Barbara Adams

submitted:

February 4, 2025

8:49 a.m.

Testimony in Support of Hawai'i HB 729 Ending Child Marriage in Hawai'i
Presented to the House Committee on Health
Pepeluali 5, 2025

Kauka Eileen A. Schweickert ko'u inoa. No 'O Haleiwa. I am a residency and fellowship trained Family Practice Physician now living in Michigan. I am a graduate of Waiialua High and Intermediate School and the University of Hawai'i. Prior to retirement I served as Clinical Faculty for the medical schools at Michigan State University, University of Michigan and Wayne State University. I also served on the National Board of Directors for the American Medical Women's Association. I submit this testimony in support of HB729 that would make marriage age in Hawai'i 18 without exception due to the deleterious effect child marriage has on health of Hawai'i's citizens.

Numerous studies correlate lower educational levels with increased divorce rate and increased family size, as well as lower wages, lower employment rates, and lower health status. Staying in school is the single greatest determinant of future health and well-being for children. Children that marry are 50% more likely to drop out of school.

A child that is married has an increased likelihood of experiencing abuse, a high risk pregnancy, of going into preterm labor, having a sexually transmitted disease, genital cancer, psychiatric illness, substance abuse, and dying prematurely.

All of these consequences are born by the child that marries, their children, extended ohana and community as a whole. All of these negative health consequences can be impacted in a positive direction with the intervention put before you today. I urge you to pass this bill and do away with child marriage in Hawai'i

If you desire data to support the assertions above I will be happy to provide that additional information from the medical literature. Additionally please refer to the testimony submitted separately by the National Coalition to End Child Marriage for further reasons why child marriage is an antiquated practice that we should discontinue.