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DC City Council Unanimously Passes Ban on Child Marriage in the District of Columbia

WASHINGTON - The Washington, DC City Council unanimously approved the Child Marriage Prohibition Amendment Act on December 17, setting the minimum age of consent for marriage at 18. This is a resounding victory for survivors of child marriage and those at risk of this little-discussed form of child abuse. The bill now heads to Mayor Bowser for approval, and will then be considered by Congress.

Said **Dr. Indira Henard, Executive Director of the DC Rape Crisis Center**; "We are very excited that DC Council has passed the bill to end child marriage in the District. We commend Councilwoman Brooke Pinto for her leadership in bringing this bill to fruition. This is a great day for survivors. What we know for sure is that protecting children should be everyone's business, and we are glad that this bill gives much needed protection to our children against child marriage in the District. We are grateful to all of the survivors who shared their stories, and partnered with us throughout this process."

"The passage of this bill is a resounding symbol of the District's commitment to putting survivors first. We at The Person Center are proud to stand alongside a community-based coalition rooted in the bravery and determination of our survivor advocates," said **Lul Mohamud, MPH, Executive Director of The Person Center**. "Ending child marriage in Washington, DC is a result of the listening ear, compassion-based action, and coordinated efforts of Councilmember Brooke Pinto's office and staff. The DC Council's monumental vote will close a door to victimization, violence, and trauma — protecting our most vulnerable across the district and across the region. We at The Person Center look forward to continuing to champion the work of this coalition to expand protections, resources, and support for our youth in collaboration with our survivor advocates, community organizations, and the DC Council."

A few steps remain before this bill becomes law. The legislation must be signed by Washington, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser, and sent to Congress. Congress has 30 days to object, approve the law proactively, or allow it to become law without taking further action.



Alex Goyette, Public Policy Manager at the Tahirih Justice Center, added “This is a resounding victory for children in the District and throughout the U.S., as DC Council joins the 13 state legislatures that have passed a ban on child marriage since 2016. This reform continues the mid-Atlantic’s leadership in the campaign to end child marriage across the US, and setting another example that the remaining 37 states should follow. We look forward to swift approval of this legislation from Mayor Bowser and Congress.”

All of Washington, DC's neighbors have already taken action to limit or end child marriage, according to a Tahirih Justice Center [report](#). DC City Councilmember Brooke Pinto (Ward 2), Chair of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, introduced the Child Marriage Prohibition Amendment Act in the fall of 2024 to right that wrong. Pinto invited public comment in what was a highly [emotional, but empowering](#) legislative hearing.

Vilas Wright testified that she was forced to marry a man twice her age after her father found out she had been raped. “No one asked me,” she said. “I was a naive and innocent little girl, even if I was a feisty redhead. No one stopped it. No one stood up and questioned if this was right or wrong. You have the power to do that today.” Read more testimonies [here](#).

And the DC Council acted. Advocates expect the bill to become law by early 2025, ensuring that predators who wish to trap children in marriage, in order to “legitimize” abuse, can no longer do so under color of law in any jurisdiction across the mid-Atlantic.

Tahirih Justice Center and partners will continue to advocate for state restrictions on child and forced marriage across the United States, as well as enactment of the federal [Child Marriage Prevention Act](#). This legislation, introduced by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Brian Schatz (D-HI), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), remains pending in the United States Congress.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Read [testimonies](#) in support of the [Child Marriage Prohibition Amendment Act of 2024](#), offered during the October 21 DC City Council [hearing](#) and in the Tahirih Justice Center column, “What survivors of child marriage want the DC Council, Congress, and the world, to know,” in [English](#), and [Spanish](#).

View the Tahirih Justice Center [report](#), “Child Marriage in Washington, DC,” and [two-page issue brief](#) about the DC law.

Learn more about the federal [Child Marriage Prevention Act](#), which encourages all states to raise age-of-marriage laws to 18; prohibits child marriages on federal lands and property; and strengthens U.S. immigration laws so that minors cannot be used by abusers — even under their parents’ direction or consent — as a passport to



immigration in this Ms. Magazine [op-ed](#) by Casey Carter Swegman and Teen Vogue [column](#) by Naila Amin.

Learn more about the national campaign to end child and forced marriage at <https://preventforcedmarriage.org/>.

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The Tahirih Justice Center is a national, nonprofit organization that serves women, girls, and all immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. By amplifying the experiences of survivors, our mission is to create a world in which all people share equal rights and live in safety and with dignity.