

## IWV Supports The Preventing Child Marriage Act

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Independent Women's Voice, which fights to enhance people's freedom, choices, and opportunities, thanks Representative Ann Wagner for her leadership on ending child marriage. The Preventing Child Marriage Act, recently passed by the House of Representatives, would prevent child marriage in United Nations-administered refugee settlements.

The majority of child marriages are forced marriages, almost always including a young girl. This practice can cause lasting harm including complications during pregnancy and childbirth, an increased risk of domestic violence, fewer educational and economic opportunities, and social isolation.

Forced marriage is nothing less than child abuse and an egregious violation of human rights. Sadly, child marriage has increased at an alarming rate, according to a **report** from Girls Not Brides, a global partnership to end child marriage. It is critical that we act to protect children from being exploited by this oppressive and dangerous practice.

The Preventing Child Marriage Act calls on the President to direct the U.S. Representative to the United Nations to use America's voice, vote and influence at the UN to call for the adoption of a definition of "child marriage" and the development of a comprehensive strategy to address child marriage in refugee settlements administered by the UN. Under the bill, child marriage is defined as a "formal marriage or informal union involving at least one person younger than age 18."

This also serves as a reminder of immigration laws in the U.S. that enable and encourage child marriage. A recent **report** from the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs revealed a **loophole in our immigration system** that had been exploited numerous times to facilitate child marriage. Congress can do more to prevent child marriage and act in the best interests of children by addressing current laws that open the door for young people (overwhelmingly girls) to be exploited.

Women and girls everywhere deserve the very best and to be free from violence and exploitation. We commend Representative Wagner for stepping up and protecting children from this terrible practice and thank the House of Representatives for adopting this important bill.

Respectfully,



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