



IWV Supports the Protect Our Girls Act

February 26, 2019

Dear Members of Congress,

Independent Women's Voice strongly supports H.R. 959, the "Protect our Girls Act," which would prohibit interstate travel for the purpose of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is defined by the World Health Organization as the partial or total removal of the female external genitalia for non-medical reasons.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a cruel and inhumane procedure and cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. We must prioritize ending this horrific practice.

FGM is a violation of human rights and dignity, and causes great and lasting physical harm to its victims. FGM has been linked to immediate and lifelong physical complications not limited to but including severe bleeding, complications during childbirth, and even death.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated **513,000 women and girls in the U.S.** are at risk of FGM or have already undergone the operation. A recent court case in Michigan revealed that FGM is still a problem in the United States when a doctor was credibly accused of performing the procedure on at least nine underage girls from three states. The judge ruled that the federal law banning FGM was unconstitutional and all charges were dismissed.

Independent Women's Voice and Independent Women's Forum have long advocated for finding ways to prevent FGM and hold offenders accountable. Last year, Independent Women's Forum **signed a letter** expressing support for reauthorizing a stronger and better Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) by including provisions enhancing penalties for female genital mutilation and allocating funding to combat gender-based violence like FGM.

We want to thank Congressman Scott Perry (R-PA) for his leadership on this important issue and urge all Members to act immediately to protect future victims of FGM by voting yes in support of H.R. 959 when it comes to the floor for a vote.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hadley Heath Manning".

Hadley Heath Manning

Director of Policy

Independent Women's Forum