

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-259 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION.

Vote Date: 3/24/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/2/2026

File No.: 586

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to protect female minors by establishing the mutilation of female genitalia of minors as a class D felony. As defined, the circumcision, excision, or infibulation of the whole or any part of the labia majora or labia minora or clitoris is considered female genital mutilation. While necessary surgical operation performed by a licensed health care provider is not in violation of this bill, performing a surgery on a minor based on the operator's or anyone else's belief that such operation is required as a matter of custom or ritual, is in violation of this bill.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language clarifies that to qualify for the exception, the operation must be performed for a medical purpose.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Rosemary Lopez, The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity: Rosemary Lopez and the CWCSEO support this bill as they believe this is a long overdue step toward protecting girls and young women in CT from the physical, emotional, and psychological harm caused by FGM.

Manisha Juthani, Commissioner, Department of Public Health (DPH): Commissioner Juthani and the DPH support this bill because it will be an important public health intervention for at-risk women and girls and would place CT in line with neighboring states. DPH states that FGM causes short-term health risks, as well as a wide range of long-term complications

due to tissue damage, scarring, and infection. They also point to studies that show that women and girls who had FGM are more likely to experience PTSD, anxiety, depression, and the manifestation of psychological distress to physical pain.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kelly Vaughan, CEO of Global Girls Worldwide Women (GGWW): Kelly Vaughan supports this bill because FGM denies girls agency and autonomy over their bodies and sexuality while causing significant and even life-threatening physical harm. GGWW states that there are no religious or cultural tenets that require FGM. They also note that under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Target 5, the US is one of 193 countries that have promised to end FGM by 2030 as it has been determined as a human rights violation.

Anonymous: This testifier supports the bill on the grounds that it protects victims.

Beth Hamilton, Executive Director of CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence: Beth Hamilton supports this bill as FGM is a harmful practice that is often completed in secrecy and rooted in a complex mix of cultural, religious, and socioeconomic factors. CAESV urges a legislative approach that centers on victims and includes culturally responsive community education, outreach, and prevention.

Mona Colwell: Mona Colwell supports this bill to protect women.

Judith Keogh, founding member of CT Coalition to End FGM/C: Judith Keogh supports this bill because in her experience, as a licensed professional counselor associate, she has worked with survivors of gender-based violence and specializes in the treatment of survivors of FGM. Keogh explains that FGM has profoundly traumatic and lifelong impacts on survivors, and often manifests into post-traumatic stress disorder. Keogh points to existing laws that criminalize child abuse, arguing that this type of operation is no different and causes young children to experience betrayal trauma.

Caitlin LeMay, Executive Director of U.S. End FGM/C Network: Caitlin LeMay and the U.S. End FGM/C Network support this bill because it will ensure that CT does not become a safe haven for FGM practices as surrounding states already have protections in place. She believes state law can provide more localized resources, and offer a more holistic and comprehensive approach to ending FGM/C. LeMay points out that the CDC estimates over half a million women and girls are either victims, or at risk of FGM/C in the U.S., with 2,742 of those coming from CT.

Michele May: Michele May supports this bill as it is a crucial step to safeguard the rights and bodily integrity of young girls in CT. Establishing the practice of FGM as a felony and protecting survivors right to testimony will ensure children in CT can grow up in a safer, more equitable community.

Dr. Katherine McKenzie, Yale Center for Asylum Medicine: Dr. Katherine McKenzie and the Yale Center for Asylum Medicine strongly support this bill because FGM poses a serious threat to reproductive health, including excessive bleeding, damage to adjacent organs, infections, and potential death as a result. McKenzie argues that FGM is a global practice

with the sole purpose to control a girl's sexuality, perpetuate harmful gender norms, and limit a girl's agency over their sexual and reproductive health.

Zehra Patwa, Co-Founder, WeSpeakOut: Zehra Patwa and WeSpeakOut support this bill because FGM/C poses serious reproductive health consequences in addition to the harmful gender norms and psychological trauma. Patwa shares that criminalizing FGM/C would allow for more clarity and conversation in the communities that perform the procedure. Finally arguing that CT is the only state in New England that has not have a law concerning FGM, Patwa believes that CT should join the 41 other states in their effort against the practice.

Angela Peabody, Executive Director, Global Woman PEACE Foundation: Peabody and the Global Woman PEACE Foundation support this bill because girls are at risk of being taken through FGM/C.

Meghan Scanlon, CEO, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence: Meghan Scanlon and the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence support this bill because of the practice is a form of gender-based violence that goes underreported. CT is one of the handful of states that does not have laws criminalizing FGM. While the CCADV supports this legislation, they also urge the committee to be cautious of how it handles survivors of domestic violence who are forced or coerced into participation in acts of FGM.

Connecticut Hospital Association: The CT Hospital Association supports the bill in its goal to end FGM "operations" on children who are forced to undergo ritual or custom-based unnecessary genital female mutilation "operations", but the CHA is concerned that the bills exceptions are insufficiently broad. CHA is worried that the bill will be used by the federal government to stop gender-affirming care services for minors. The CHA commends the extension of the statute of limitations because of the nature of the abuse. The CHA supports the bill but urges the committee to consider the amendments to ensure protections to gender-based care.

Simenesh Comollo: Simenesh Comollo supports this bill because, as a victim herself, she hopes to advocate for the young women and girls who are also victims, and to prevent this from happening to others. Comollo shares that although she is traumatized by what happened to her, this state is her home and what happened to her should not happen to any child.

Lisa Del Sesto, President, CT-National Organization for Women: Lisa Del Sesto supports this bill because FGM is a severe form of child abuse and gender-based violence that results in lifelong physical and psychological consequences for survivors.

Anastasia Law, Legal Advisor, Equality Now: Anastasia Law and Equality Now support this bill as it would end the practice of "vacation cutting" as CT is one of 9 states in the US that has not criminalized FGM. They believe states law can aide local agencies to provide community-based prevention and ensure that survivors have access to legal remedies and support. They shared that FGM is a form of gender-based violence and one that affects 2,742 women in CT, who are either living with or at risk of FGM. The emphasized that FGM deprives girls of their autonomy, health, and futures, while perpetuating cycles of harm.

Karen A McDonnell, PhD, Associate Professor: Karen McDonnell supports this bill because they are an advocate who has spent the last decade working with survivors of FGM/C and has seen the consequences. McDonnell says that this bill would establish clear criminal penalties and a legal framework to prosecute the crime of FGM and provide essential protections for individuals who have undergone FGM. She also supports the bill because the bill would directly combat "Vacation Cutting", which is the act of traveling to CT with the intent to have the procedure done in the state.

Raine Palladino, Treasurer, CT NOW: Raine Palladino supports this bill because FGM/C is a severe form of child abuse that results in lifelong physical and psychological consequences for survivors. Palladino says that this bill would establish clear criminal penalties and a legal framework to prosecute the crime of FGM and provide essential protections for individuals who have undergone FGM. They also supported the bill because it would directly combat "Vacation Cutting".

Zehra Patwa, Survivor: Zehra Patwa supports this bill because she is a survivor and would like to see an end to the harmful practice that is a form of gender-based violence. Criminalizing FGM/C would act as a strong deterrent to parents who may be pressured by community members to perform the operation. This bill would be one aspect of a multi-pronged strategy to end FGM/C, by using federal and local laws to bring community action and conversation about the impacts of the operation. Patwa says that one girl cut is one too many.

Krystal Rich, Connecticut Childrens Alliance (CCA): Krystal Rich and the CT Childrens Alliance strongly supports this bill because FGM is internationally recognized as a serious human rights violation and a form of gender-based violence. CT remains as one of the few states that does not have state-specific criminal prohibition that addresses FGM. CCA recommends using both criminal prohibition with culturally responsive education, outreach, and prevention to engage communities that partake in the practice; CCA also emphasizes that legislative response must be survivor-centered, to ensure that victims of FGM are not punished.

Mariya Taher, Co-founder, Sahiyo: Mariya Taher and Sahiyo support this bill because they believe that FGM is an extreme form of violence and torture that forever alters the lives of the girls affected. Sahiyo draws on data from a digital storytelling project, which highlights that FGM occurs in a variety of communities in America, including American-born individuals like Mariya Taher. In the case of Taher, she was brought to India where she underwent the procedure and has several family and friends who have undergone the procedure here in America. Sahiyo recognizes that while the current bill is a great start, it does not include necessary provisions to include education of stakeholders and first responders; Sahiyo strongly urges the committee to include robust provisions for education and civil remedies in SB 259.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

American Civil Liberties Union: ACLU-CT opposes the bill as it is currently written as it fails to address unintended consequences to LGBTQ+ and other minority communities. While the ACLU-CT supports meaningful reform to empower survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, they fear that this bill could potentially be used to deny gender-affirming care or

other reasonable medical treatments; citing that in six states it is a felony to provide certain forms of medically necessary care to transgender young people. ACLU-CT also opposes the aim to criminalize FGM which would add to the state's prison population, rather suggesting they model the bill to emulate PA 17-5 which enforces penalties to those found in violation.

Reported by: James Finlay

Date: March 31, 2026