

Testimony House Bill 2217
Female Genital Mutilation
March 18, 2013

Members of the Committee and Chairman King, I thank you for the opportunity to come before you to discuss a topic that is not pleasant to think about or talk about, but is abhorrent nonetheless and needs to be addressed in Kansas as it is being addressed in many other states and nations as well.

I first became aware of female genital mutilation when a Somali population took residence in my district. The medical community was soon dealing with issues that are not typically seen in Kansas, but as the population grows, the necessity of addressing it grows as well. When we speak of mutilation, the term is proper because the practice is performed by untrained family members often with crude instruments and without sterilization, or anesthetic. The pain is unimaginable and not at all temporary. I found that the scarring is often so severe that if vaginal birth is attempted, it can lead to tearing inside the vaginal wall that creates fissures in the muscles. Many times the woman will be unable to control urine or feces for the rest of her life because they are eliminated through the vagina rather than the urethra or rectum.

I consider this practice among the worst forms of abuse leaving lifelong pain and scares both physically and emotionally. People ask "Is it really done in Kansas?" Of course we have not been witnesses of the practice and sometimes the parents say they transport their children back home to have it performed and then bring them back into the state, but I believe it is most likely to take place right here in the secrecy of their own residences. I have spoken with medical practitioners who have witnessed the scarring and damage done by this practice and although I was told they were furnishing testimony, I have not been able to find they have sent it. For that I apologize.

I stand for questions.

Thank you again for allowing this hearing. I hope you will find it in your hearts to support this bill and send it out of Committee to the floor for passage through the Senate.

Sincerely,

Representative Peggy Mast
Speaker Pro Tem