



Assembly Bill 2924 Prohibiting Child Marriage

SUMMARY

AB 2924 will protect the health, safety, and well-being of California's children by prohibiting marriage for children under the age of eighteen.

BACKGROUND

California is one of the only 5 states in the nation with no minimum age for marriage.

Child marriage is a harmful practice and form of child abuse that restricts the autonomy and opportunities for minors, robs minors of their childhoods, forces them into social isolation, and limits their educational opportunities. The practice also undermines statutory rape laws and creates a legal shield for child predators and human traffickers.

According to U.S. Census data, more than 8,000 children in California reported being married in 2021, and the Pew Research Center [reports](#) that California has the sixth-highest rate per capita of child marriages in the United States.

Child marriage disproportionately affects young girls. According to data published in the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#), there were nearly 300,000 child marriages in the United States between 2000 and 2018. Of these, 78% were girls wed to an adult man.

Many human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and UNICEF, strongly oppose child marriage and note that it is a human rights abuse.

Unfortunately, despite a plethora of [evidence](#) demonstrating the harms of child marriage, the practice of child marriage is legal in California.

NEED FOR THE BILL

California [Family Code §6501](#) sets the age of majority – meaning, who is considered to be an adult – at 18 years old. Although California grants minors very certain limited rights, the age of majority plays a crucial role in determining when individuals are granted certain rights and responsibilities, including the right to vote, enter into contracts, and make important legal decisions.

Notably, the age of sexual consent in California is 18 without exception, meaning that any individual who engages in sexual intercourse with a minor can be charged with statutory rape – unless that individual is the spouse of the minor ([Penal Code §261.5](#)). Recognizing the harms of child marriage, 45 states have established a minimum marriage age. Ten states have prohibited child marriage altogether – Minnesota, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

SOLUTION

AB 2924 will eliminate the current exemptions in law which permit minors to marry in California if they have a guardian's consent and court approval.

This will remove marriage as an outlet for criminals to escape punishment, and, most importantly, protect California's children.

SUPPORT

AHA Foundation
American Atheists
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
California NOW
California Women's Law Center
Central Valley Justice Coalition
Equality Now
Feminist Majority Foundation

Free to Thrive
Freedom From Religion Foundation
Girls Learn International
Global Citizen
My Sister's House California
National Center for Lesbian Rights
Open Door Family Assistance Program
Project 14:14
Ruby's Place
Safe House Project
Step Up
Still Room Studio
Together We Will Albany-Berkeley
Ultraviolet
Unchained At Last
Women's and Children's Crisis Shelter
Zonta Club of Burbank Area
Zonta International
Zonta Porterville
Zonta Newport Harbor

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