



**Senators Terhar and Lehner
SB 214 Sponsor Testimony
House Criminal Justice Committee**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for allowing us to testify today on Senate Bill 214, which would ban female genital mutilation in the State of Ohio.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a procedure that involves partial or total removal, or any other similar injury to external female genitalia or female genital organs. The ritual procedure is generally performed on girls between the ages of 4 and 14.

SB 214 makes performing the procedure on a minor, as well as transporting a minor to a facility for the purpose of undergoing the procedure, a second degree felony, which carries a penalty of 2-8 years in prison. In addition, the Ohio State Medical Board automatically reviews the license of any doctor convicted of a misdemeanor or felony for possible suspension. During the review process, that doctor's license is generally put on hold and they are prohibited from practicing.

FGM has no medical benefits, and can actually cause several health problems. Complications such as excessive bleeding, infection, and extreme fever can occur immediately following the procedure. Girls who have undergone this procedure can also develop persistent or permanent medical issues, such as urinary problems, painful scar tissue, and increased risk of childbirth complications including stillbirth.

According to the AHA Foundation, Ohio has between 10,000 and 25,000 girls at risk of being forced to undergo this procedure. We know this is happening in Ohio and in our nearby states. In 2017, a doctor in Michigan was arrested and became the first person charged under the federal anti-FGM statute on six counts of female genital mutilation. At least two of the victims were from Minnesota. At the time, Minnesota had a state law in place to ban the practice, but Michigan did not. After the doctor was arrested, the Michigan legislature quickly passed a law to ban FGM in their state. It is now critical that we follow in Michigan's footsteps because recently, a federal district court judge dismissed the FGM charges against the doctor, citing the Commerce Clause in ruling that anti-FGM laws should be handled by the states.

In addition to Michigan, 26 other states have adopted laws banning the practice. West Virginia and Illinois have current FGM bans in place. Pennsylvania has a bill similar to 214 currently pending in their legislature. As our neighboring states pass these laws and make it clear they won't tolerate this within their borders, we should protect the girls who may otherwise be subjected to this violent and dangerous practice in Ohio as the surrounding states ban the practice.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for allowing us to testify on Senate Bill 214, and we would be happy to take any questions at this time.