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**Senators Terhar and Lehner**

**SB 214 Sponsor Testimony**

**Senate Judiciary Committee**

Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary 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, also known as female circumcision or female cutting, is a procedure that involves partial or total removal, or any other similar injury to external female genitalia or female genital organs. The 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 fifth degree felony, which carries a penalty of up to a year in prison. The bill also imposes a fine of up to $25,000. 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.

According to the World Health Organization, 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.

Female genital mutilation of minors has been banned under federal law since 1996, and that law was amended in 2013 to prohibit families from leaving the country to have the procedure performed elsewhere. As of now, 26 states have also adopted laws banning the practice. Similarly to the federal law, SB 214 would prohibit Ohioans from travelling out of state in order to have this procedure performed on their young daughters.

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. Recently, you may have heard about Dr. Jumana Nagarwala of Michigan, who was arrested and charged under federal law 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 Dr. Nagarwala was arrested, the Michigan legislature quickly passed a law to ban FGM in their state.

In addition to Michigan, West Virginia and Illinois have current FGM bans in place. Pennsylvania has a similar bill, HB 413, currently pending in their legislature. As our neighboring states pass these laws and make it clear they won’t tolerate this in their borders, Ohio should do the same, and protect the girls who may otherwise be subjected to this violent and dangerous practice.

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