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**Testimony for SB 1069 An Act Concerning Female Genital Mutilation**

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Senator Winfield, Rep. Stafstrom, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

In the 5 years I have been working to end FGM/C within my community, one of the most important deterrents against the practice of FGM/C has been the law. We have heard from countless parents who were pressured to have their daughters cut by family or community members, and the defense of an anti-FGM/C law has, in most cases, been the single most compelling argument in protecting their daughters from this harmful traditional practice. In some cases, people who believe that cutting is justified for cultural reasons, have been deterred from carrying out the practice because of the laws in place.

When the defendants in Australia's first ever FGM/C case were found guilty in 2015 of cutting 2 minor girls, there was a huge sigh of relief in the US when members of the community were reminded that the federal anti-FGM/C law in place at that time, as well as laws in multiple states, protected their daughters from cutting, including taking their daughters out of the country to be cut.

Confusion ensued following the Nagarwala case in the US in 2018 when the judge struck down the federal law on a technicality. However, those states where an anti-FGM/C law was already in place, provided a sense of security to many law-abiding members of society.

While studying the numbers may be helpful for planning services, the difficulties of obtaining hard and fast data of this, often secretive, traditional practice should not hold up the security that people need to ensure their daughters are kept safe.

As a survivor of FGM/C, I implore you to take immediate action to protect girls from this harmful traditional practice by passing a law that prohibits FGM/C on minor girls and hold people accountable for violations of this law. and to encourage practicing communities to adopt safer, alternative practices as rites of passage.