

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Submitted to the Committee on S/C on Family & Fiduciary Relationships
For HB 168

Compiled on: Thursday, April 10, 2025 9:02 AM

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Hearing Date: April 7, 2025 2:00 PM

Lauren Van Wagoner
Survivor of Child Marriage
Kansas City, TX

At 17, I was forced into marriage by my mother to protect my now ex-husband from excommunication from the Mormon Church. At that young age, his eternal salvation was placed on my shoulders. I remember every detail of that November day. I went to school that morning because I had a research paper due in first period. Then my mother checked me out of school, and we drove from rural Alabama to Florida. We went to Florida because they had no record of my mother's custody arrangement with my father—an active-duty Senior Master Sergeant in the Kansas Air National Guard. With a lie about custody and the stroke of a pen, my mother was able to sign me over to my now ex-husband. My father didn't find out until a month later when I told my older sister at Christmas. Despite paying child support, he had no idea his parental rights had been bypassed. I remember the heartbreak in his voice when he realized he had been robbed of the chance to be at my wedding. He didn't even know the man I had married, and he was terrified for me. All he could do was encourage me to finish high school and go to college—but his rights as a parent had been stripped away. I complied with the marriage because I didn't think I had another option. I believed I was doing the right thing by my religion, and in my heart, I thought marriage was what I was supposed to do. But the truth is, the decision was never really mine. No one asked me what I wanted. No one considered what this would mean for my future. I wish I could say my 12-year marriage was happy, but it was filled with abuse—towards both myself and my children—as well as infidelity. In 2018, my husband abused me in front of our children and walked out the door. For the first time in my entire life I was alone. I didn't know what to do. I was a para at a public school, didn't have a vehicle, and I lived in rural Kansas. I was left with 4 small children. For six months, we lived on our farm without heat or indoor plumbing. Eventually, I sold our animals and our property. I moved my children to Kansas City to start over. While I'm grateful for my children and the life I've rebuilt, I would never wish this experience on anyone else.

Edward Barlow
Self
HOUSTON, TX

I strongly support the bill to end child marriage. I hope that all representatives vote for this common-sense bill.

Cecilia Wood

self-board certified family law attorney

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill primarily because it violates the Full, Faith, and Credit Clause Article IV, Section I of the United State Constitution to the extent it denies the effect of a judgment of another state removing the disability of minority. After Obergefell, it is highly unlikely that it would withstand strict scrutiny. The fact that we teach kids how to have "safe" sex in schools and yet prohibit them from doing so within the confines of marriage is counter-productive if not outright ridiculous. It also makes no sense that parents are prohibited from allowing their child to enter into a marriage relationship. If fifty percent of marriages end in divorce, isn't that a good indicator that age is not the controlling factor?

George Brian Vachris, P.E.

self

Humble, TX

I am OPPOSED to this bill. As a former High School Teacher in Houston ISD, I witnessed many adolescent pregnancies. In many cases the mothers were in a relationship with one man. In almost all cases the young mother chose to keep her baby. This bill would prohibit a marriage at an age where such marriages are common in many countries south of the Border from which many of my students came, even with parental or judicial approval. I do not think that single parent households are as beneficial to raising children as a two parent household. Please OPPOSE this bill

NANCY GOETTMAN, MISS

AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY/ TEXAS EAGLE FORUM/CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA

SAN ANTONIO, TX

I DO NOT AGREE WITH ANY BILL THAT DOES NOT PROTECT THE CHILD OF THEIR NATURAL GENDER FOR CHILD AND PARENT ./LAWS THAT AGREE WITH TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE LAWS AND DIVORCES ONLY./ I AGREE WITH LAWS AGAINST ABORTION/ I AGREE WITH LAWS THAT DO NOT ALLOW MARIJUANA OR HEMP TO BE USED IN ANY WAY OR SHAPE AS MEDICINE. /NO ONE BUT A PRIEST, CATHOLIC OR NON-DENOMINATIONAL BISHOP, PASTOR OR REVEREND MAY MARRY OR DIVORCE ANYONE IN OUR COUNTRY. A PERSON MAY NOT MARRY BEFORE THEY ARE 18 YEARS OF AGE WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THEIR PARENTS.

Laura Gallier

Self-retired CPA

Houston, TX

Please support and pass this bill. I see there is broad support for it, and that is encouraging. It's so sad how some parents are forcing their children to marry so young. Thank you Rosenthal for introducing this.

Shariq Ghani

Self - Non-profit

Richmond, TX

I am for HB 168.