

Yesterday, the Governor signed the legislation ending child marriages here in NY. The age of consent is now 18 years old, or 17 with either parental or judicial consent would be necessary. The key for the Town Clerks is the bill included no increased penalties on clerks for improperly filed marriage licenses associated with changing the age. An earlier version had an increase in penalties but through the efforts of the Legislation Committee and our Lobbyist, Statewide Public Affairs, we were able to make sure that the final version that passed both houses and was signed by the Governor stayed consistent with the current statute as it relates to penalties.

The effective date for this legislation is 30 days from when it is signed, so as of Thursday July 20, 2017 this legislation would be in effect. Below is the Governor's press release:

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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

GOVERNOR CUOMO SIGNS LEGISLATION ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN NEW YORK

Raises Age of Consent for Marriage from 14-Years-Old to 18-Years-Old

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today signed legislation to end child marriage in New York. The legislation raises the age of consent to marry from 14-years-old to 18-years-old and amends the process to require parental and judicial consent for marriage of those between 17-years-old and 18-years-old.

"This administration has worked tirelessly to defend exploited and disadvantaged New Yorkers, provide minors with the rights and protections that they deserve, and ensure that women are empowered to have control over their own lives, and with this legislation, we continue to help protect those who cannot protect themselves," **Governor Cuomo said.** "This is a major step forward in our efforts to protect children and prevent forced marriages, and I am proud to sign this legislation that puts an end to child marriage in New York once and for all."

In February, the Governor [announced](#) he was advancing legislation to end child marriage by raising the age of consent to marry from 14 to 18-years-old in New York. Until this legislation was signed today, children as young as 14-years-old could get married with parental permission and written consent provided by a judge. The previous law, which dates back to 1929, does not provide guidance to judges determining whether or not to grant consent. More than 3,800 minors were married in New York between 2000 and 2010. Now, the law expressly prohibits anyone under the age of 17 from getting married and provides guidance for judges who are tasked with making a determination as to whether or not a 17-year-old may get married. Specifically, a judge shall ensure that the individual is entering into the marriage of his or her own free will, that they are not being compelled by force, fraud, or coercion, and that the marriage will not endanger the mental, emotional, or physical safety of the applicant.

Research shows that young women who marry before 19 are 50 percent more likely than their unmarried peers to drop out of high school, and four times less likely to graduate from college. Women who wed before 18 are also at increased risk of developing mental and physical health disorders, including facing a 23 percent higher risk of heart attack, diabetes, cancer and stroke. Girls who marry young are 31 percent more likely to live in poverty when they are older and are

three times more likely to be beaten by their spouses than women who wed at 21 or older.

Senator Andrew J. Lanza said, "This law will go a long way in honoring our values and commitment to protecting children, especially young girls, from the coercive, oppressive, and destructive practice of ill-informed or forced marriage. As the father of two girls, I sincerely thank and commend Assemblywoman Amy Paulin and Governor Andrew Cuomo for their vision and leadership."

Assemblywoman Amy Paulin said, "Current law allowing 14 year olds to get married is discrimination against women written explicitly in our statutes. Victims of child marriage are forced and condemned to a life that they did not choose with no means of escape, resulting in physical and mental health problems, loss of education and economic opportunities, and an increased likelihood of experiencing violence. Today, we bring an end to forced child marriage in New York State and set a precedent that the rest of the states should follow."

Sonia Ossorio, President, National Organization for Women, said, "NOW is tremendously grateful that our Governor has made it a top priority to end child marriage in our state, and working together with lawmakers, the advocates, and the courageous survivors – we got it done. New York is leading the nation in ending this human rights abuse and setting an example for the entire nation to follow. I have no doubt that other states will follow suit and make this awful practice a relic of the past."

George Zarubin, Executive Director of the AHA Foundation, said, "By signing this legislation, Governor Cuomo is standing up to protect the rights of young New Yorkers. New York lagged behind other states and even other nations for too long by allowing the harmful practice of child marriage. Marrying young significantly impedes the ability of young girls to finish an education and to live a full and happy life. The AHA Foundation thanks Governor Cuomo for his leadership on this issue and for everything he does to protect the rights of all New Yorkers."

Connie Neal, Executive Director of the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, said, "We are pleased to see Governor Cuomo sign into law this legislation which will end child marriage in New York State" said "Child marriage has been a problem of great concern, as it is coerced marriage. Worldwide women who are married before the age of 18 are 3 times more likely to have been physically assaulted by their spouses than women who marry at 21 or older. The legislation passed both houses unanimously, and updates an antiquated New York State law which will allow for girls to have more educational, social, and economic opportunities and advantages in the future."

Hon. Judy Harris Kluger, Executive Director of Sanctuary for Families, said, "With the signing today of the law banning child marriage, New York State has taken an important step forward to end a human rights violation. Sanctuary for Families has seen firsthand that young girls who are forced to marry are more likely to suffer domestic violence and are much less likely to complete their education. We thank Governor Cuomo, Assemblywoman Paulin and Senator Lanza for their leadership and for standing with us against gender inequality and child exploitation. Marriage is now a milestone of adulthood, not childhood."

Jeanne Smoot, Senior Counsel for Policy and Strategy at the Tahirih Justice Center, said, "The Tahirih Justice Center is proud to have helped shape this landmark legislation to help protect girls from irreparable, lifelong harm. With this new law, New York has taken a strong

step towards preventing forced marriages and mitigating the many risks to a young person's health, safety and future that can come from marrying too young, even if by choice. We especially appreciate the Governor's early leadership this session to make sure this important legislation passed. Limiting marriage to legal adults, as this law does by emancipating any 17-year-old who is granted permission to marry, is not only the right thing to do, it's smart and sound public policy."

Heather Barr, Senior Researcher on Women's Rights, Human Rights Watch, said, "Around the world, a girl under age 18 married every two seconds. It is a national shame that so many of these marriages are happening in the US. Governor Cuomo and New York lawmakers have shown real leadership today in legislating against child marriages, and we hope the 47 states that have yet to act will follow New York's lead."