



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

San Francisco Chapter

January 20, 2024

Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
President Susan Ellenberg, Hon. Sylvia Arenas, Hon. Cindy Chavez, Hon. Otto Lee, Hon. Joe Simitian
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose California

Via Email: BoardOperations@cob.sccgov.org

**Re: Letter of Support for Resolution 24-1937 Announcing the
County's Commitment to End Child Marriage Agenda Item: 15 BOS
Meeting Date: January 23, 2024**

Dear President Ellenberg and Supervisors Arenas, Chavez, Lee, and Simitian,

The United Nations Association-USA-San Francisco (UNA-SF) and the Ratify Movement are in **strong support of the aforementioned Resolution to End Child Marriage Under 18, No Exceptions** as brought by Santa Clara County Supervisor Otto Lee.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), child marriage is a violation of the rights of girls and women. Girls who are married as children are more likely to be out of school, suffer domestic violence, contract HIV/AIDS and die due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Child marriage also hurts economies and leads to intergenerational cycles of poverty. Nationally, there were more than 300,000 child marriage certificates issued from 2000 - 2018, including to children as young as 10-years of age. During this same time, California allowed more than 23,588 marriage certificates for child brides.

California is among just seven states – including New Mexico and Oklahoma – that does not have a minimum age for marriage. Despite this, the state prevents a victim of child marriage to be eligible for divorce before eighteen years of age. **Child marriage often covers up child rape. The child bride is not able to get divorced or legally separate, and if they enter a shelter to escape domestic violence, they are considered “runaways” and returned to their spouse.** A “No Child Marriage Under 18, No Exceptions” Resolution in Santa Clara County will support the efforts to pass a “No Exceptions” law at the state level.

The mission of the UNA-SF is to promote and encourage everyone to achieve the goals of the UN, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in order to provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity. The SDGs recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. **In particular, SDG 5.3 seeks to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation”** with the goals of gender neutrality and empowering all women and girls.

The UNA-SF has established the Ratify Movement as a program and platform for collaborative partnerships to achieve gender equality. The Ratify Movement has worked to advance local ordinances, state laws, and Congressional actions for a more equitable outcome for women, girls, and femmes, including support for the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). **In addition we call on California to be the eleventh state to ban child marriage with no exceptions.**

We urge Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors to support this resolution as a stop gap to ending the cycles of poverty and violence that child marriage creates.

Sincerely,



Ashley Raveche
President,
United Nations Association-USA-San Francisco and
Ratify Movement



January 23, 2023

Attn: Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors

RE: Resolution Announcing the Commitment to End Child Marriage Under 18, No Exceptions Law

Dear Members of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to express strong support for the proposed recommendation to adopt an "18 no exceptions law" to end child marriage in Santa Clara County (agenda item #15). Child marriage is a troubling practice that can have severe and lasting consequences for the individuals involved. It deprives children of their fundamental rights, compromises their education, and exposes them to increased risk of physical and mental health issues. Furthermore, it perpetuates gender inequality and reinforces harmful cultural norms.

Child Marriage is a human rights issue, and I ask that Santa Clara County officials pass this resolution unanimously and send a strong message to Santa Clara County residents that as a society we do not tolerate child marriage. I urge each member of the Board to support and vote in favour of the proposed policy. Ending child marriage aligns with our shared values of justice, equality and the well being of our community.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and for all that you do to protect children in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Adriana Caldera Boroffice".

Adriana Caldera Boroffice

CEO, YWCA Golden Gate Silicon Valley

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County's Commitment to End Child Marriage under 18, No Exceptions
Agenda Item: 15, BOS Meeting Date: January 23, 2024**

Dear President Ellenberg and Supervisors Arenas, Chavez, Lee, and Simitian,

My name is [Rima Nashashibi](#), I am the founder and president of [Global Hope 365](#) Global Hope is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls, locally and nationally, by advocating for their safety through raising awareness, education, prevention, and empowerment. Our focus is on ending harmful practices towards women and girls such as Child Marriage, Human Trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence.

We thank Supervisor Otto Lee for introducing our resolution to end child marriage under 18, no exceptions and urge you to join other cities and organizations that voted for this resolution and passed unanimously in numerous CA cities and is pending in 37 cities and counties.

Child marriage remains a serious problem in present-day America. Child Marriage is shockingly still legal in 40 states including CA. Not only is it legal in CA but there is no minimum age to marry.

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Between 2000-2018, approximately 300,000 minors were married, mostly young girls married to adult men. Children lack the rights and resources of adults which makes them vulnerable to coercion and predation. As a result, many child marriages are forced marriages, and/or are cover-ups for child abuse and exploitation and other sex [crimes such as statutory rape](#).

Several Child Marriage Survivors we work with indicated Parental Consent is Parental Coercion. They also emphasize that testifying in support of this resolution makes them relive their trauma, they feel it is still important enough for them to be the voice of the voiceless to prevent this from happening to other children no matter the cost to them. They are NOT statistics. These are human beings and it is people's lives we are talking about here and kids at that.

We all understand the reasons behind the laws of no voting until you are 18, no signing a contract until you are 18, and the prohibition in CA of the use of indoor tanning devices until you are 18. We at Global Hope 365 strongly believe that the same rationale should apply to marriage under the age of 18. Females lose control over their reproductive rights and at a higher of domestic violence when they marry under the age of 18, and a rapist should not be provided with a get-out-of-jail-free card by marrying his victim.

U.S. Department of State has denounced child marriage as a Human Rights Abuse in other countries that contributes to economic hardship” in the words of a State Department document published in 2016. What about our country and our kids?

In addition, the U.S. is a signatory to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including 5.3 which mandates ending child marriage under 18 no exceptions by 2023.

The [American Medical Association](#) has called for an [end to Child Marriage](#) in [resolution H-60.901, 2019](#), stating “Child marriage is associated with higher rates of sexually transmitted

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infections, early pregnancies, divorce, and intimate partner violence than women married at age 21.” In addition to a higher rate of Infant and maternal mortality.

[The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#), issued a [report recently on the interlinkages between Forced Child Marriage and Human Trafficking](#) which we all know involves Fraud, force, and Coercion and benefiting commercially by the receipt of payments from the use and abuse of another human being.

Statistics Regarding Child Marriage

- Young women and girls ages [16-19 face intimate partner violence victimization rates](#) almost three times the national average.
- [The majority \(70%-80%\) of Child Marriages end in divorce.](#)
- [Minors who marry early are more likely to “discontinue their formal education prematurely, earn low wages, and live in poverty.” Girls who marry early are fifty percent more likely to drop out of high school and four times less likely to graduate from college.](#)

Child Marriage is a Violation of Human Rights

- UNICEF: Child Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights.
- Child Marriage is a violation of Article 16(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- U.S. Department of State: The United States has denounced child marriage as a Human Rights Abuse in other countries that contributes to economic hardship” in the words of a State Department document published in 2016. What about our country and our kids?

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Respectfully submitted,

Rima Nashashibi
Founder and President
Global Hope 365

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