



## POLICY ADVOCACY TO END CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE U.S.

The Tahirih Justice Center is proud to help lead the campaign to end child marriage across the nation, working with survivor advocates to change antiquated state laws that fail to protect children from abuse and coercion.

### How Big is the Problem?

Child marriage is a real and persistent problem in the United States. According to PBS Frontline, well over 200,000 children under age 18 were married in America between 2000 and 2015. The majority of them were girls, and the majority married adult men. Mounting U.S.- specific research shows that child marriages can result in devastating consequences and put young people at great risk of lifelong harm.

### Our Work to End Child Marriage

In 2016, Tahirih drafted and spearheaded the bipartisan passage of a new law that made Virginia the first state in the country to limit marriage to legal adults. Now, we are providing our legal expertise and advocacy on bills in a growing number of states. Our advocacy efforts include: preparing and submitting expert testimony to state legislatures; raising awareness through media engagement and outreach; providing critical insights from our direct services experience; elevating survivor advocates as leaders; and serving as an expert resource to legislative champions across the country.

### Momentum is Growing

Following our landmark legislative victory in Virginia, Texas, New York and Kentucky also signed bipartisan bills into law that limit marriage to legal adults and establish meaningful safeguards against forced marriage. In May and June 2018, Delaware and New Jersey became the first states to ban all child marriage. Since 2016, several other states have also enacted new laws to limit child marriage, and many more have taken up reform bills.

### Our Position

Tahirih has analyzed relevant laws across all 50 U.S. states and Washington, DC, and served hundreds of girls and young women facing forced marriages. We believe that the most straightforward and powerful solution to America's child marriage problem is to set the minimum marriage age at 18, without exceptions. In states where this is not immediately possible, alternative reforms should legally empower those permitted to marry to advocate for themselves and safeguard them against forced marriage and other harm. A full copy of Tahirih's report, *Falling Through the Cracks: How Laws Allow Child Marriage to Happen in Today's America*, and other resources can be found at [tahirih.org/childmarriage](http://tahirih.org/childmarriage). Other policy recommendations to address forced marriage can be found at [tahirih.org/forcedmarriagepolicy](http://tahirih.org/forcedmarriagepolicy).

***Tahirih is committed to ending child marriage in America. We urge advocates and lawmakers across the country to critically examine how their state's laws put children at risk, and join us in this historic movement.***

### *at a glance:*

#### HOW DO STATE LAWS ON MINIMUM MARRIAGE AGE COMPARE?

*As enacted by October 2018*

- **2 states** (Delaware and New Jersey) set the age floor at 18, no exceptions
- **4 more states** (Virginia, Texas, Kentucky and New York) limit marriage to legal adults (age 18+, or emancipated minors)
- **18 states** do not set any age floor by statute
- **36 states** do not require judicial approval for older minors, just parental consent
- **7 states** expressly permit pregnancy to lower the minimum marriage age

[tahirih.org/childmarriage](http://tahirih.org/childmarriage)

To get involved in the Tahirih Justice Center's national campaign to end child marriage, please email [policy@tahirih.org](mailto:policy@tahirih.org).

## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Survivor advocates are leading the charge, state-by-state, to end child marriage in the U.S., and your state could be next.

Are you, or have you supported, a survivor who was under age 18 when she was married in the U.S.?

Help us show how child marriage makes girls in the U.S. vulnerable to abuse and other harm by filling out the short form at [tahirih.org/share-your-child-marriage-story](https://tahirih.org/share-your-child-marriage-story), or by emailing Tahirih at [policy@tahirih.org](mailto:policy@tahirih.org).

*If you're facing or fleeing a forced marriage or know someone who is, please visit [preventforcedmarriage.org](https://preventforcedmarriage.org) to get help.*