



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: Maine Relay 711

Rachel Talbot Ross

39 Washburn Avenue
Portland, ME 04101
Phone: (207) 747-5461

Rachel.TalbotRoss@legislature.maine.gov

May 5, 2017

Testimony of Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross regarding
LD 745, An Act To Prohibit Female Genital Mutilation
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good morning, Senator Rosen, Representative Warren and esteemed colleagues of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Rachel Talbot Ross, and I represent House District 40, which comprises the Portland neighborhoods of Parkside, Bayside, East Bayside, Oakdale and the University of Southern Maine campus. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to offer an amendment to **LD 745, An Act To Prohibit Female Genital Mutilation**.

When I read this bill, it struck me that this was not already a crime. It turns out, there are many ways you can currently prosecute female genital mutilation, or FGM, under current Maine assault laws and under the federal ban on FGM, passed in 1996.

There is little to no indication that this practice is happening in Maine, but if the sponsor believes it is still an issue, then establishing duplicative statute is not the solution. Instead, I offer an amendment to this bill that takes another tack to get at the issue, since the assertion is that current penalties are not working.

My amendment proposes the establishment of three positions administered through the Department of Health and Human Services to provide culturally specific community outreach and education services. The purposes of these positions would be to educate communities and necessary professionals about the physical and emotional health risks of FGM and that the practice is banned under current federal law as well as to connect victims of FGM with community services and resources as necessary.

I appreciate this discussion today and am happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you for your consideration.

Proposed Amendments

LD 745, An Act to Prohibit Female Genital Mutilation

1. **Strike Section 1A of the bill.**
2. **Strike Section 1B of the bill.**
3. **Strike Section 1C of the bill.**
4. **Add a section to support community-based education.** Establish funding for a position overseen by DHHS to support a community-based program to provide culturally specific services, outreach to and education for communities that may practice female genital mutilation to include:
 - Information about the health risks and emotional trauma inflicted by the practice of female genital mutilation;
 - The current federal law for committing female genital mutilation; and
 - Culturally specific community services and resources available to victims of FGM.
5. **Add a section to support professional training.** Establish funding for training of professionals to include:
 - Culturally sensitive trainings on FGM;
 - Information about the practice of female genital mutilation and the associated health risks and emotional trauma inflicted by the practice;
 - Current federal law for committing female genital mutilation; and
 - Mandatory reporting obligations.