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Press Release

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Circumcision Proposal Adds Fuel to Health Care Debate

Bill proposal from MGMBill.org would protect boys from forced circumcision and save hundreds of millions of dollars in annual health care costs.

SAN DIEGO, California – Lawmakers toiling over a final health care reform bill this week now have another medical issue to contend with: circumcision. Yesterday the San Diego based health and human rights organization MGMBill.org submitted a proposed bill to every member of Congress that would prohibit the controversial practice of forced circumcision. Fourteen state legislatures across the country received similar bill proposals for their respective states.

“Health care reform will not be complete until patients are given full autonomy over their own bodies,” said Matthew Hess, president of MGMBill.org. “If a person doesn’t want a healthy, functional body part taken from him by force, shouldn’t the government step in to provide that protection? Last year in this country more than one million foreskins were amputated from children who had no say in the matter. An important part of their manhood was taken from them whether they liked it or not, and that has to stop.”

One pregnant mother in Lexington, South Carolina, agrees.

“Cosmetic genital surgery is not a choice we get to make for another human being,” said Brandy Walters, whose young son is intact. “My husband and I researched this issue before our first son was born and we easily came to the decision that circumcising a child who cannot consent is just wrong. If our son ever decides he wants to be circumcised, that option will always be there for him.”

Another intactivist mother said that Congress should roll the proposed MGM Bill into the current health care reform bill as an amendment before the final version is passed.

“With all the talk about rising health care costs, it only makes sense to stop spending money on surgeries that are unnecessary,” said Erica Fuchs of Ames, Iowa. “Even the more conservative estimates figure the savings to be in the neighborhood of \$200 million per year, and that’s not counting all of the additional dollars spent on follow-up care to deal with complications. Newborns and older boys should be allowed to grow up intact so that as adults they can decide for themselves whether or not they want elective surgery of their most private of body parts. There is no legitimate reason to force it onto them.”

Brandy and Erica are not alone in their opinions. Forced circumcision has come under intense criticism over the past year, both in the U.S. and abroad. In March, a group of intactivists marched outside Congress and the White House demanding that boys be given the same legal protection from forced genital cutting as girls. Over the summer, the chairman of the Swedish Pediatric Surgeons Association compared male circumcision to female genital mutilation and regarded it as “an assault”. That was followed in September by a North Carolina court conviction of a father who circumcised his two infant sons for religious reasons. A High Court judge in South Africa ruled on a similar case the following month, broadly declaring that circumcision without consent was illegal and went against an individual’s constitutional rights.

At least one state is not waiting for Congress to act. Massachusetts will be the first U.S. state to provide boys and girls with equal protection from circumcision if Senate Bill No. 1777 passes before the current session ends. Similar state bill proposals were submitted by MGMBill.org yesterday to more than 2,800 lawmakers in California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.