



mgmbill.org

San Diego, California
comments@mgmbill.org
www.mgmbill.org

press release

For Immediate Release – 12/18/2003 • Contact: Matthew Hess, President • comments@mgmbill.org

MGMbill.org Drafts California Male Genital Mutilation Bill

SAN DIEGO, California - Today MGMbill.org announced that it has drafted a California version of its federal bill proposal that would protect boys from male genital mutilation (MGM), commonly referred to as circumcision. The proposed bill, which is posted on MGMbill.org's website, would amend the California Female Genital Mutilation Act of 1996. Like its U.S. counterpart, that law outlawed female circumcision but gave no protection to males.

Matthew Hess, President of San Diego based MGMbill.org, said he plans to submit the California version of the bill to the State Legislature in Sacramento on the same day that he sends the federal version to Congress. "I drafted a California version of this bill in case Congress fails to act," said Hess. "If our national leaders choose not to protect our boys from genital mutilation, then I am hopeful that California will act on its own to set a precedent for the rest of the country.

"California has always been a progressive state, and male circumcision rates in California have fallen to about 30% - 35% of boys, versus the current U.S. average of about 55% - 60%," said Hess. "I think the chances of the bill passing in California may be a little better than in Congress because of increased awareness here of the harm that circumcision causes."

Like the proposed federal bill that MGMbill.org drafted two weeks earlier, the California version would also protect intersex individuals from genital mutilation, and would increase the maximum imprisonment time for an offense to 14 years (from the current California maximum prison time of 7 years).

Hess said the initial feedback from the public on his federal bill has been overwhelmingly positive. "The words of support and the personal stories that I have received through email have been quite moving," he said. "There is a lot of hidden pain among men who know they have lost something very valuable as a result of circumcision, but so many of them are afraid to speak about it in public for fear of being ridiculed."

Male genital mutilation, also known as circumcision, is the surgical removal of the foreskin from the penis. In addition to containing thousands of specialized nerve endings capable of feeling sexual pleasure, the foreskin protects the glans (the "head" of the penis) by keeping it moist and covered, and aids in sexual intercourse by providing a gliding mechanism that reduces friction and dryness for both the male and his partner. Although its world origins are unknown, circumcision is largely practiced in the U.S. today for perceived improvements to genital hygiene, for religious purposes, and to make a boy's penis look like his father's and like others in the community.