

The Connecticut General Assembly



For IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 9, 2017

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Rep. Cook Applauds House Passage of Bill to Prevent Forced Child Marriages

Bill raises legal age to marry to 16

State Rep. Michelle Cook (D-Torrington) applauded the House's unanimous passage of legislation that would raise the legal age to marry to 16 and enact greater safeguards for minors petitioning to be married.

HB 5442, An Act Concerning The Legal Age To Marry In This State, bans anyone from marrying under the age of 16, and requires 16- and 17-year-olds to obtain parental consent and the approval of the Probate Court.

Rep. Cook introduced the bill after speaking to UConn Masters of Public Health students looking to address the issue of child marriage in Connecticut.

"I'd like to thank UConn graduate students Audrey and Matt Blondin for really bringing this issue to the legislature's attention. I think we were all stunned to learn that Connecticut has no minimum age to marry," **Rep. Cook** said. "We like to think that forced child marriage is not something that happens in this country, but unfortunately that's not the case. Girls in particular are vulnerable to being coerced into marrying older men. This bill protects our children by putting safeguards in place to ensure no minor is entering a marriage against their will."

The legislation requires the Probate Court to hold a hearing to determine that the minor consents to the marriage and understands the consequences of entering a marriage.

Connecticut currently has no minimum age beneath which a child cannot marry. 16- and 17-year-olds can marry with parental consent and children 15 and under can marry with judicial approval and parental consent.

The bill passed the House 147 - 0 and now goes to the Senate.

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