



# **CITY OF MALDEN MASSACHUETTS In City Council**

## **PAPER # 103-22**

### **RESOLVE**

**Resolve:** That we the Malden City Council strongly condemn the abusive practice of child marriage in Massachusetts. Further, that we indicate our support for state-level legislation currently under consideration to ban legal marriage in Massachusetts, for the protection of human rights, dignity, and opportunity for all young people, especially young women who are disproportionately impacted by child marriage laws.

**WHEREAS** forced child marriage constitutes a violation of a minor child's rights and dignity; and

**WHEREAS** the United States Department of State recognizes marriage under 18 to be a human rights abuse; and

**WHEREAS** current Massachusetts law includes a loophole allowing marriage under age 18 and with *no minimum age*, resulting in more than 1,200 children as young as 13 married in the Commonwealth between 2000 and 2018 -- 83% of them to adult men; and

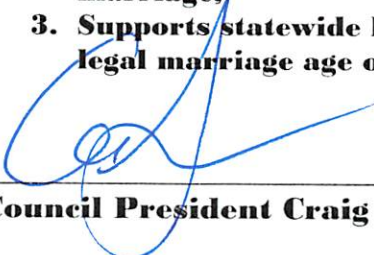
**WHEREAS** child marriage increases the risk of domestic violence and poverty, and undermines a child's access to healthcare, education, and opportunity; and

**WHEREAS** minors who are married cannot obtain abuse prevention orders, seek help from DCF or domestic violence shelters, enter into a legal contract or retain an attorney, or even file for their own divorce or annulment; and

**WHEREAS** child marriage petitions have continued throughout the pandemic, and Massachusetts has no residency requirement for out-of-state petitioners, resulting in our status as a 'destination' for those seeking child marriages.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE MALDEN CITY COUNCIL:**

- 1. Condemns the abusive practice of child marriage in Massachusetts.**
- 2. Stands with women's right organizations, including Zonta International, and elected leaders across the country, including our own local legislative delegation, who are working to end the harmful and archaic practice of child marriage;**
- 3. Supports statewide legislation that would ban child marriage and affirm a legal marriage age of 18 with no loopholes.**

  
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**Council President Craig Spadafora**