THE POLICY

Ending Child Marriage Act (S.395)

OVERVIEW

Child marriage has devastating, lifelong consequences for individuals, and also undermines the health and well-being of our families and communities. A minimum marriage age of 18, without exceptions, is the strongest, simplest and most effective way to stop child marriage and its harmful consequences.

Women who marry as girls face:

- **High divorce rates** (up to 80%);
- **High drop-out rates** – child brides are 50% more likely to drop out of high school and four times less likely to graduate from college;
- **Increased risk of poverty** – up to 31% greater likelihood – and teen mothers who marry and later divorce can face more than double the likelihood of future poverty;
- **More medical and mental health problems** – including some psychiatric disorders at rates 3 times higher than among those who marry as adults; and
- **Greater vulnerability to domestic violence** – girls age 16-19 experience intimate partner violence victimization rates that are higher than the national average, and an early marriage can isolate a girl and subject her to that risk round-the-clock.

- A recent report by the Post and Courier found that over the last 20 years, there have been more than 7,000 girls married in South Carolina.²
- Of the more than 7,000 marriages that occurred among children over the last 20 years, more than 6,000 of these girls were 16 or 17.
- Statistically, 16 or 17 year old girls are among the most vulnerable people to intimate partner violence.

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