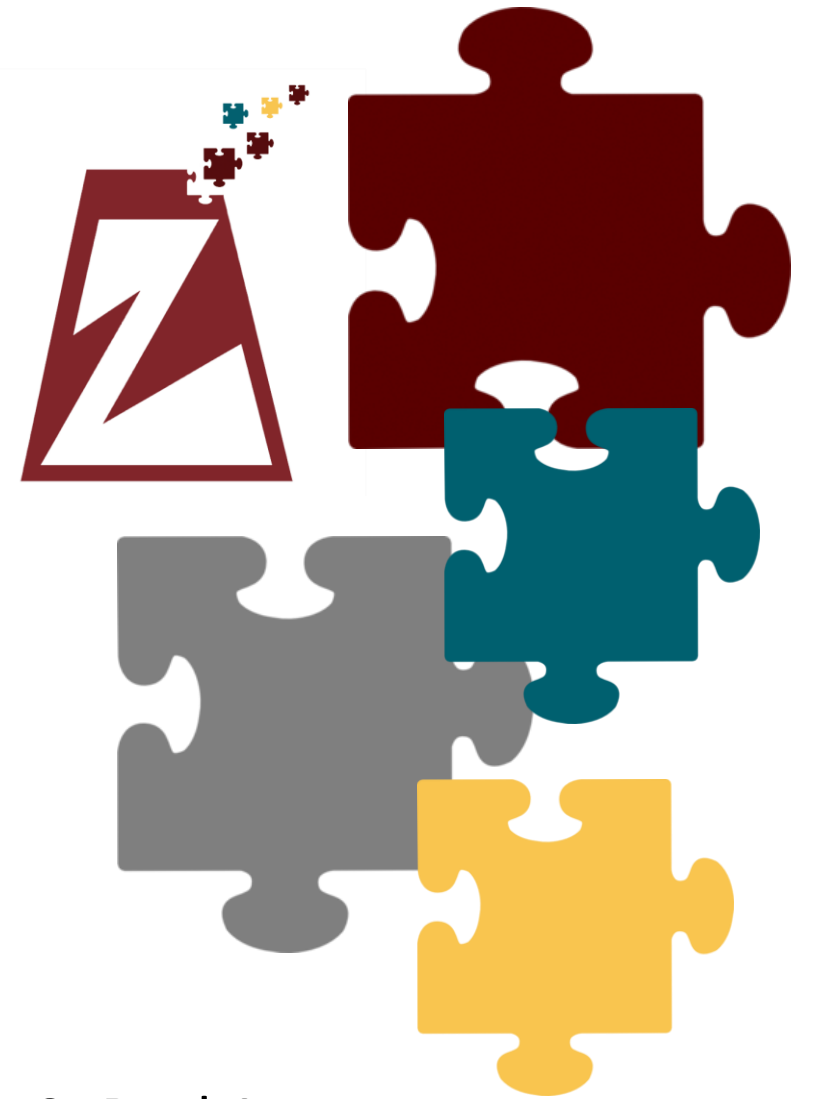


Eliminating Child Marriage: Lessons Learned in Minnesota

Jane Austin, D7 Lt Gov / Z Club of Minneapolis St Paul Area

Tania Hughes-Kremers, D7 Governor / Z Club of Minneapolis St Paul Area

Deb Kellerman, D7 Area 3 Director / Zonta Club of St Cloud





GLOBAL PROGRAMME TO END CHILD MARRIAGE

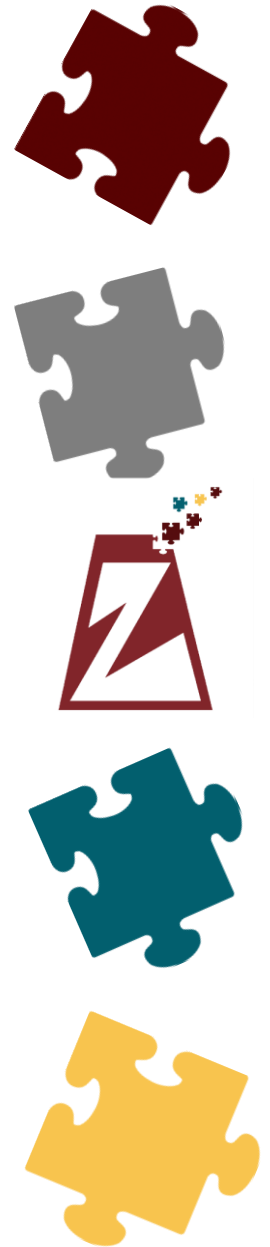


Why we seek to *eliminate* Child Marriage

- Child marriage is most often forced marriage
- It undermines statutory rape laws
- It leaves victims of child/forced marriage with little legal protection or recourse:
 - No divorce rights
 - No ability to file a protective order
 - No ability to go to a domestic violence shelter
 - No ability to sign a contract (e.g. lawyer, apartment rental)
- It produces lifelong repercussions in terms of education, economic opportunities and health

Child marriage is considered a human rights abuse

Sources: *Unchained At Last* and *International Center for Research on Women*
(<https://www.icrw.org/issues/child-marriage/>)





APPROXIMATELY 4 OUT OF 5
marriages involving girls below the age
of 15 end in death, divorce, or separation.

Girls who marry
before age 19 are
50% MORE LIKELY
than unmarried girls to
drop out of high school...

...and **4 TIMES**
less likely to
complete college.

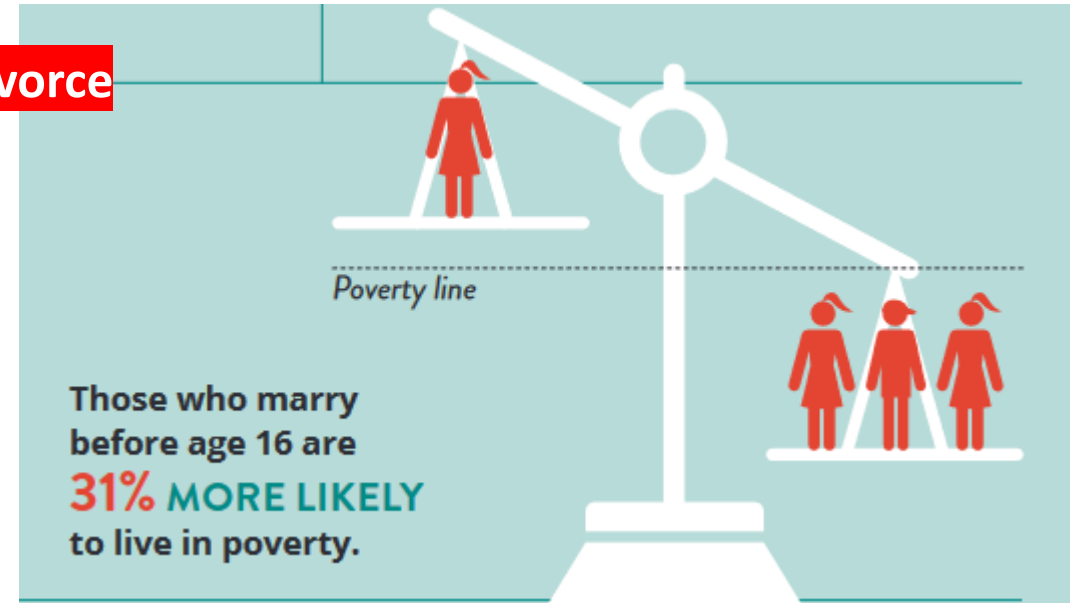
Between 70 and 80 percent of child marriages end in divorce

18 OUT OF 20 WOMEN

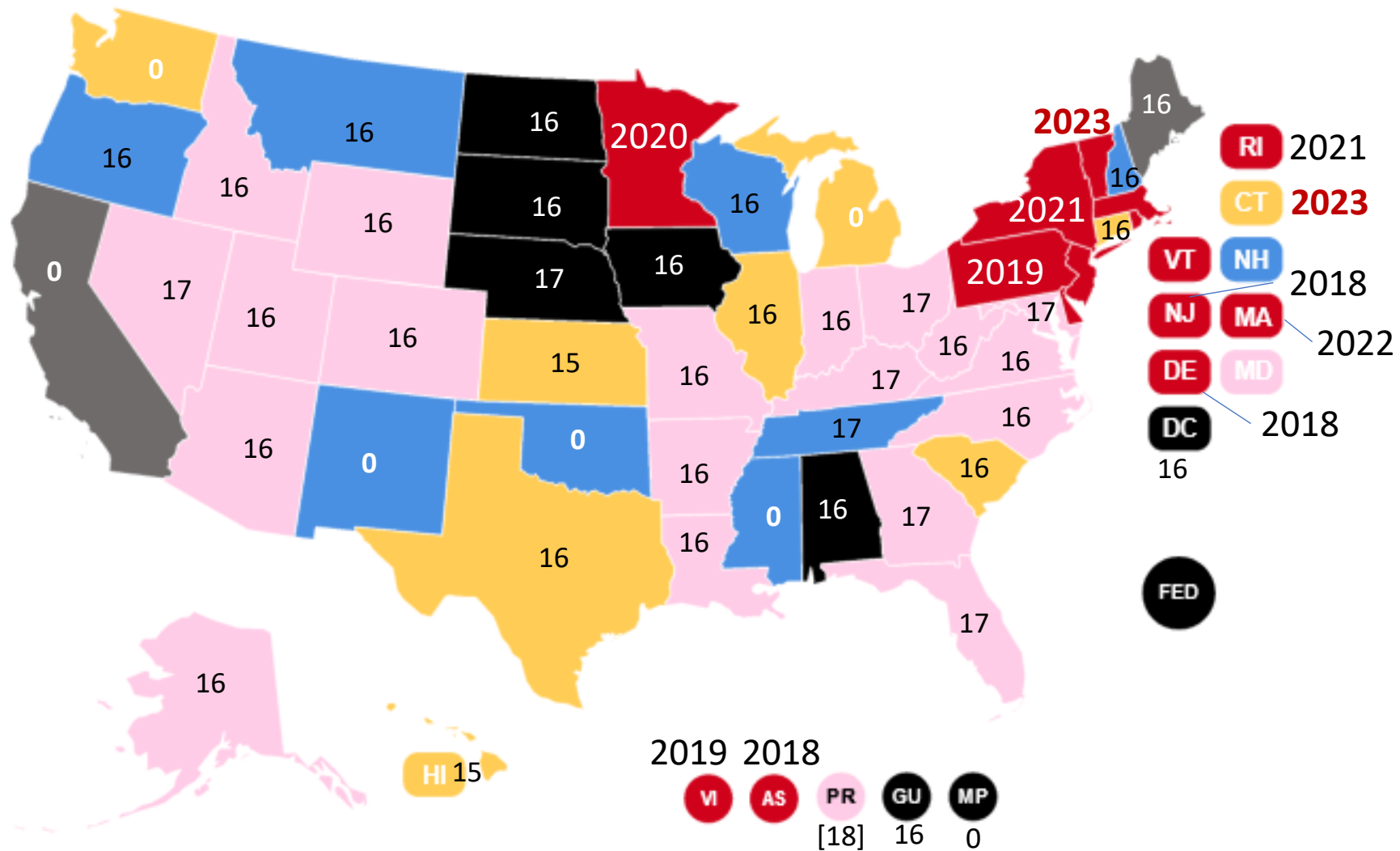
participating in a 2019 study of child
marriage reported experiences of
physical, sexual, or emotional abuse by
their husbands during their marriage.

11 OUT OF 20 WOMEN

reported financial abuse by their spouse.



<https://www.icrw.org/issues/child-marriage>



NO ACTION
 PREV. BILL(S) FAILED
 STRONG BILL PENDING
 WEAK BILL PENDING
 BILL PASSED: LIMITS CM
 BILL PASSED: ENDS CM

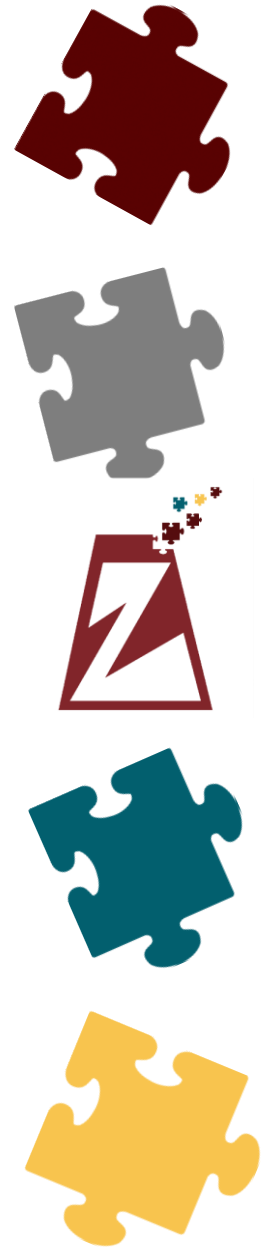
Child Marriage in Minnesota before 2020

<https://www.unchainedatlast.org/child-marriage-in-minnesota/>

- An estimated **1,118** children were married in Minnesota between 2000 and 2018*
- Youngest age allowed for marriage was **16**; youngest married was **16**
 - All minors are required to obtain judicial approval to marry. Minors may marry, with the consent of the person's legal custodial parents, guardian, or the court, “when, after a careful inquiry into the facts and the surrounding circumstances, the person's application for a license and consent for civil marriage of a minor form is approved by the judge of the district court.”

Previous legislation died at the end of the legislative session in 2018

*Source: Fraidy Reiss, *Child Marriage in the United States: Prevalence and Implications*, Journal of Adolescent Health (December 2021)





So how did we achieve success in Minnesota, and how does that relate to other states?

Educating ourselves, our communities, and our legislators

Collaboration with like-minded organizations

Dialogue with legislators

Persistence!

The success story for Minnesota:

Tania Hughes-Kremers

D7 Gov & Zonta Club of Minneapolis St. Paul Area

Deb Kellerman

D7 Area 3 Director & Zonta Club of St Cloud

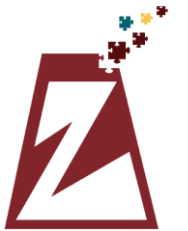


2019: Split MN Legislature & Stuck in Committee

House of Representatives had passed a bill raising legal marriage age to 18 with no exceptions

In September 2019, Companion Senate bill sat – stalled – in the Senate Judiciary Committee

Unchained At Last had given up on Minnesota assuming no movement was possible



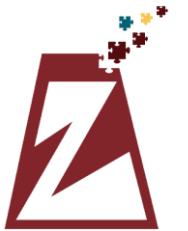
This Is where Zonta Comes In . . .

Fraidy Reiss of *Unchained at Last* speaks at 2019 District 7 Conference at invite of D7 Gov. Shelley Schultz

Minnesota Zontians find out about a stalled bill to end child marriage in the state

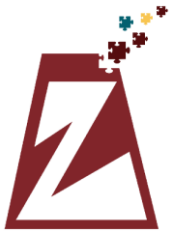
Gov. Shelley arranges meeting with *Unchained at Last* after District Conference. Outcomes include:

- MN Zontians & District Advocacy Chair commit to supporting actions to move the bill forward
- *Unchained at Last* offers to hold a Chain-in Event in conjunction with a film debut in Duluth, MN
- *Unchained at Last* prepares report on Child Marriage in MN



Greasing the Wheels

- eMails to club presidents with:
 - Update since District Conference
 - Key points about why legislation is needed
 - Opportunity to be involved – upcoming post card campaign, encouraged to contact their state legislators & how to look-up who they are, invited to share with others to also participate
- MN Zonta Clubs had 2 Senators on the Judiciary Committee holding up the bill - including the chair!
- *Unchained at Last* works with the House and Senate sponsors of the legislation and other like-minded organizations to further action



Contacting Key Senators:

Zonta Club of Minneapolis St Paul Area – Tania

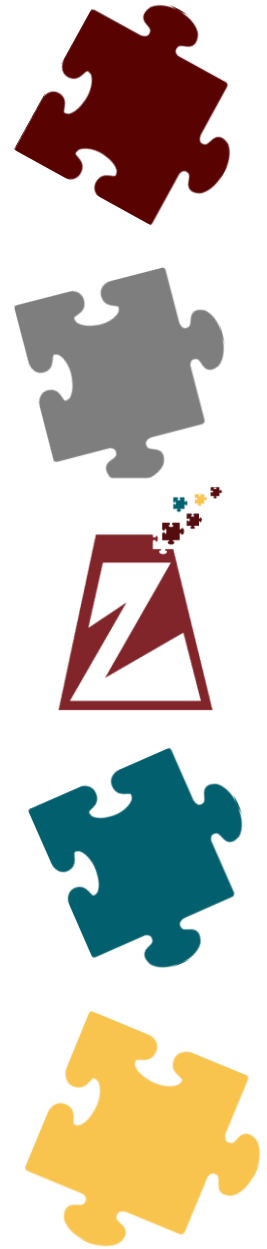
Chair Judiciary Committee

- Called his office to ask for a meeting regarding this specific bill, possibly with representatives of *Unchained at Last*
- Sent detailed emails including key talking points
- Sent postcards as part of larger advocacy efforts
- Had a minimum of 6 “contact” points with him
- We never met and he never returned my outreach

The Senate bill passed out of the Judiciary Committee in February 2020, the week before the Chain-in event.



Chain-in at the Capital



Fraidy Reiss, bill sponsors Sen. Sandy Pappas and Rep. Kaoly Her, and volunteer students participate in press conference and Chain-in for media on February 13, 2020

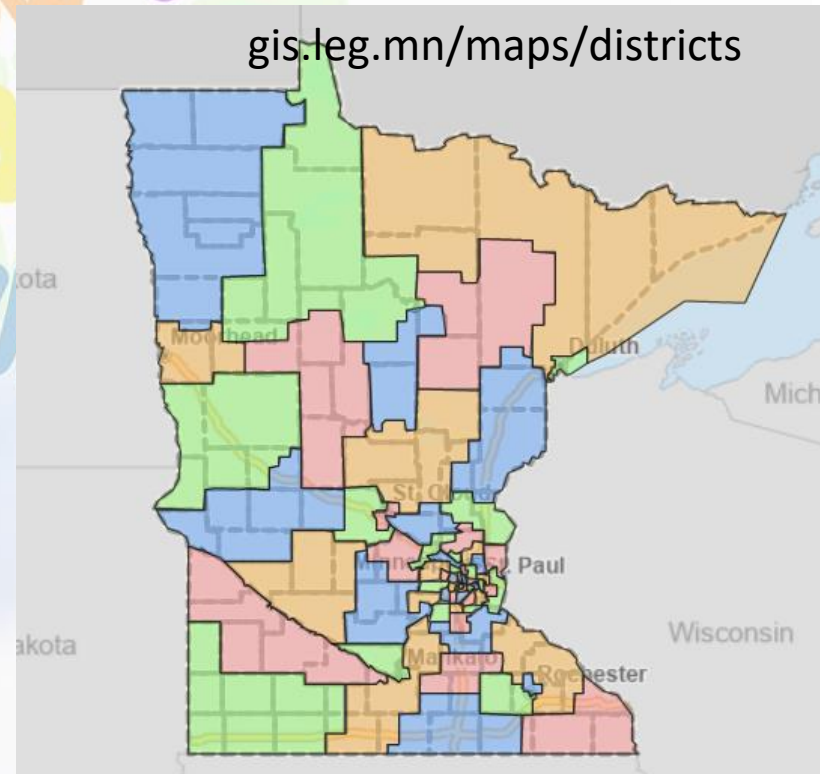
Contacting Key Senators

Zonta Club of St. Cloud (Deb Kellerman's story)



Local, Area, and District

- EDUCATION
- ENGAGEMENT
- ADVOCACY



Educating our legislators to change their understanding:

Before –

"I said, well, that's not up for our state Legislature to decide, that's already decided by constitutional principle. The other question is are there couples who have a legitimate desire to get married and should the state stand in their way?"

Senator Warren Limmer, Chair of the MN Judiciary Committee



Host a Postcard Party

Do you want to make sure legislators get the message that they need to end child marriage?

Unchained At Last (www.unchainedatlast.org/host-a-postcard-party/)

Host a postcard party – in person or virtually. Here's how:

1. Submit the form below to let us know your plans.
2. Get from us a printable postcard template and sample messages, plus a list of legislators to target.
3. Invite everyone you know to join you in filling out the postcards – in your house or via video chat.
4. Let us know how many postcards you mailed -- and how much fun you had!



POST CARDS

End exemptions for child Marriage in MN

Current MN law allows children age 16 or 17 marry with parental consent and judicial approval. Child marriage severely jeopardizes outcomes in health, education, and economic freedom. It also increases the risk of domestic violence, and inconsistent with state law on statutory rape. I therefore urge you to support and pass **Senate Bill S. 1393** and protect all minors from child marriage in Minnesota.



End exemptions for child Marriage in MN

Did you know children can legally marry in Minnesota? Current MN law allows children age 16 or 17 marry with parental consent and judicial approval. In 2013, an estimated 1,142 children age 15-17 living in Minnesota were already married; almost all were girls marrying adult men.

Child marriage can easily be forced or coerced by parents. Child marriage severely jeopardizes outcomes in health, education, and economic freedom. It also increases the risk of domestic violence, and is inconsistent with state law on statutory rape.

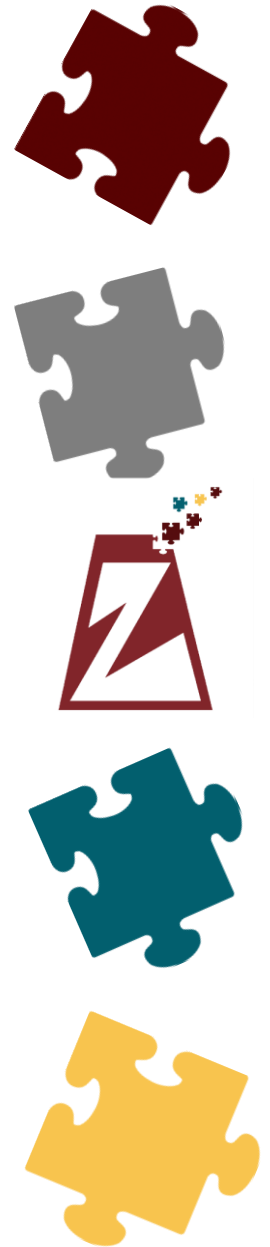
This has to stop! I therefore urge you to support and pass **Senate Bill S. 1393** and protect all minors from child marriage in Minnesota

After hearing stories from young women forced into marriages with older men changed his mind

“I can only think it’s [child marriage] inappropriate, especially when a dowry is paid to the young lady’s parents. It’s almost like buying a bride. And that should never happen in our state. After considering the legal principles versus the intention of the bill, I’m becoming sold on the idea that it’s a proper thing to do.”

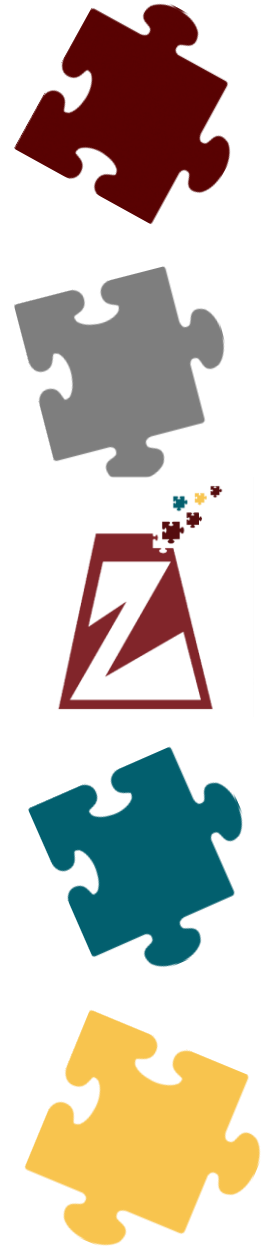
Senator Warren Limmer, Chair of the MN Judiciary Committee

Source: *Minneapolis Star Tribune*



Unanimous Success!

- Minnesota became the **4th state in the nation** to end child marriage
- The **2nd state to do so unanimously** – during a pandemic - with split party control
- Governor Walz signed the bill, and it **went into effect on August 1, 2020**



EDUCATE!

- Research the issue specific to your state. Get statistics from governmental entities (including local officials) so you can speak knowledgably and accurately on the size and impact of the issue.
- Connect the dots between the age of marital consent and other laws. Learn the statistics related to poverty, lack of education, and damaged lives related to early marriages.
- Empower girls with information, skills, and support networks.
- Educate and rally parents and community members.
- Create allies on the issue and raise community awareness by discussing it with other groups with similar concerns and interests, community leaders, and others.
- Develop a relationship with local media by sending out stories, talking to reporters, and keeping them notified of community discussions.



WORK WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS:

- Contact your legislators to gauge interest in the issue and to develop an awareness about the need for changes to state laws. Follow protocol, be a constituent to speak to them, or bring a knowledgeable guest to speak to the issues.
- Find a state Representative and state Senator willing to sponsor the bill. Assist them by providing draft legislation.
- Continue to communicate with bill sponsors and your own elected officials on status of the bill. *ASK: What are their concerns? Their arguments against?*
- *Be persistent* in seeking their support for eliminating child marriage
 - Post-card and letter campaigns
 - Emails and phone calls
 - Face-to-face meetings with legislators and their staff

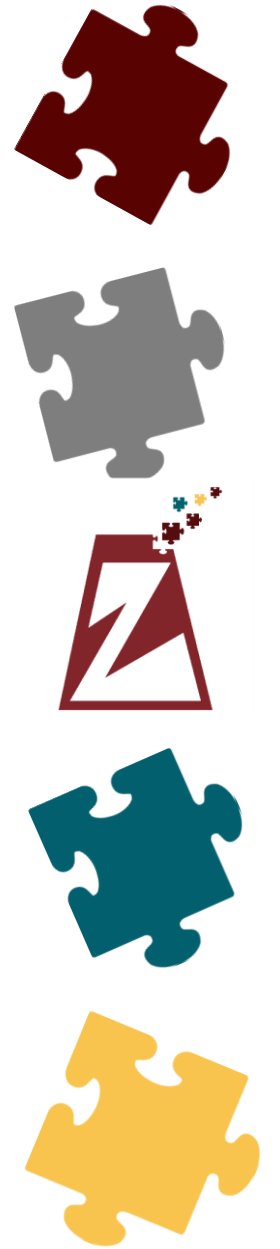




UNCHAINED
at last

Unchained At Last

<https://www.unchainedatlast.org/>



Zonta USA Caucus:

<https://zontausa.org/end-child-marriage-in-the-usa>

<https://zontausa.org/stopchildmarriages-psa-toolkit/>

Watch me First:



The billboard features the Zonta International USA Caucus logo on the left, which includes the text "ZONTA INTERNATIONAL USA CAUCUS" and "EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY". The main text on the billboard reads "Child marriage is happening here." with the website "stopchildmarriages.org" below it. A young girl in a white dress holding a bouquet is the central image. Logos for UNICEF and ZONTA USA are at the bottom. Below the billboard, the text reads: "End Child Marriage #StopChildMarriages PSA Billboard Campaign in partnership with UNICEF USA".

< — START HERE

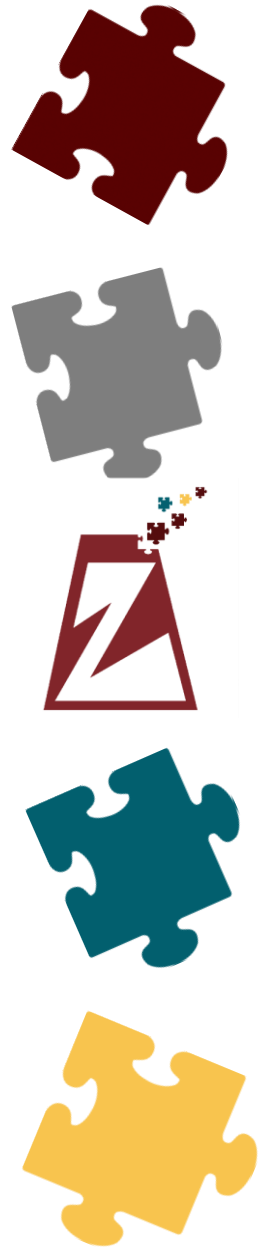
Please Review the Campaign Powerpoint FIRST...

(open to full screen in lower right corner for speaker notes)

**NOTE All PSA's MUST lead to
StopChildMarriages.org**

It will answer many of your questions. Then browse thru ALL of the downloads. Start with

1. Billboards 101, then read
2. who to contact, and
3. the script for the conversations with billboard folks.



Open discussion

What is happening in your state?

What are the arguments hampering success --
or changing minds?



Questions? Comments?

Our contacts:

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DebraKellerman51@gmail.com

j_austin08@yahoo.com

