

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Raise the Age of Marriage to 18 **A.3891 Ramos/S.3086 Salazar**

The New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) urges the New York State Legislature to protect minors by amending the Domestic Relations Law to raise the age of marriage to 18 years-old with no exceptions, and repeal provisions that allow minors to get married.

Currently in New York State, the law allows 17 year-olds to get married, provided that they obtain parental written consent, and written approval and consent of a justice of the Supreme Court or of a judge of the Family Court. The law does not, however, provide an avenue for 17 year-olds to file for divorce. New York state law discourages individuals and entities from signing contracts with individuals under the age of 18 by making contracts with children voidable. This is exemplified by the fact that minors cannot initiate legal proceedings, open bank accounts, rent vehicles, lease housing, and more.

Abusers will employ a variety of tactics to maintain power and control over their victims, such as financial, emotional, psychological, and physical abuse. Seventeen year-olds are more vulnerable to these tactics because of their already limited access to legal action and resources due to their status as a minor. Moreover, according to the World Policy Analysis Center, young women who are married before the age of 18 are three times more likely to have been physically assaulted by their spouses than women who marry at 21 or older.¹

NYSCADV supports the passage of this legislation to protect minors by amending the Domestic Relations Law to increase the age of marriage to 18 and to repeal provisions that currently allow minors to marry.

ABOUT NYSCADV:

Established in 1978, NYSCADV is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the information clearinghouse, primary point of contact, and resource center on domestic violence for the State of New York. NYSCADV is responsible for supporting the development of policies, protocol, and procedures to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention and also provides education and technical assistance to the network of primary-purpose domestic violence service providers statewide.

For more information, contact: Joan Gerhardt, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, 518.482.5465

Revised: March 5, 2021

¹ WORLD Policy Analysis Center, *Fact Sheet: Assessing National Action on Protection from Child Marriage*, University of California, Los Angeles (2015), available at http://worldpolicycenter.org/sites/default/files/WORLD_Fact_Sheet_Legal_Protection_Against_Child_Marriage_2015.pdf.