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***Celebrating 29 Years of Empowering Women***

April 29, 2017

Honorable Jerry Hill  
State Capitol, Room 5035  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax: 916-651-4913

**RE: SB 273 (Hill): Prohibit marriage for underage children- SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Hill,

On behalf of the Santa Barbara Women’s Political Committee (SBWPC), I am writing to express support for SB 273, which will prohibit marriage under the age of 18. Among SBWPC’s missions is the protection of children and particularly vulnerable young women through political and social action and educational activities. “...Our children are our greatest national resource and their daily well being from their earliest developmental stages until they reach school age must be among the highest priorities facing government and policy makers.” We support policies that “challenge cultural and societal norms that tolerate and create an environment in which sexual and domestic violence occurs.” (<http://sbwpc.org/positions-new/>)

We support this bill because it closes a loophole in state law that allows even young children to wed. Currently there is no minimum age requirement for marriage in California; there are only some discretionary provisions that may be put into place should a court be made aware those safeguards are necessary. The current provisions do not provide meaningful regard for the well-being of a child because Courts assume that parents are looking out for a child’s well-being—that is an assumption that has proven to be unsupported by the data. A recent Pew Research Center Study found that 5.5 out of every 1,000 15-to-17 year olds is married in California, which is the sixth highest per capita in the nation.

The data establishes that most children who marry are minor girls marrying adult men. Children who marry face long odds on success; they are unlikely to find the resources to leave an abusive relationship, enter a domestic violence shelter, find counsel to represent them or make their way through the legal system to obtain a divorce. Moreover, 70-80% of marriages that began under the age of 18 end in divorce, and children who marry before 18 are more likely to live in poverty.

Therefore, the Santa Barbara Women’s Political Committee wishes to sign on as a supporter of SB 273 and urges its passage in the Senate.

Thank you for reviewing our organization’s position on this issue. Should you wish to communicate further with us, please email us at [info@sbwpc.org](mailto:info@sbwpc.org) or visit our website: [www.sbwpc.org](http://www.sbwpc.org)

Sincerely,  
*Catherine J. Swysen*  
Catherine Swysen, President SBWP

Cc: Assemblymember Monique Limón, Fax: (805) 564-1651  
Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, ATTN: [tobias.halvarson@sen.ca.gov](mailto:tobias.halvarson@sen.ca.gov)