A Proclamation

Whereas, Massachusetts has a long history of being a haven for refugees, and Massachusetts continues to welcome all refugees to the Commonwealth who are fleeing persecution; and

Whereas, Female Genital Cutting is a cultural practice in some communities that is intended to promote beauty and cleanliness, it is a practice that may result in serious medical harm and trauma; and

Whereas, Female Genital Cutting involves the removal of all or a portion of a girl's genital tissue; and

Whereas, Female Genital Cutting is a human rights violation, and a form of discrimination against women and girls; and

Whereas, Curtailing the practice of Female Genital Cutting should involve a public health approach, and raising awareness about the harmful effects of FGC would involve culturally appropriate health education for vulnerable communities; and

Whereas, Women and girls of the Commonwealth should have access to adequate and culturally appropriate health care; and

Whereas, Massachusetts supports the education of health care providers about Female Genital Cutting in order to de-stigmatize care and promote health education; and

Whereas, Massachusetts supports the active engagement and involvement of refugees and immigrants and health care providers in the design of health care policies and practices that affect them; and

Whereas, Data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals that Massachusetts is ranked 12th in the nation for the number of women and girls, who have had FGC performed on them or are at risk of FGC; and

Whereas, On November 20, 2018, the 6th Circuit United States district court struck down the 1996 federal law criminalizing FGC on technical grounds, finding that Congress did not have authority to pass such a law; and

Whereas, That same federal judge opined FGC is "a despicable practice" and "a criminal assault" to be regulated by the States; and

Whereas, Twenty-eight states in the United States have passed and implemented state level legislation to ban and prevent FGC; and

Whereas, Citizens of the Commonwealth desire to protect their fellow residents of Massachusetts from this traumatizing and debilitating practice; and

Whereas, The sixth of February is International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Cutting (FGC), a day to raise awareness of the practice and work toward its elimination,

Now, Therefore, I, Charles D. Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby proclaim February 24th to March 2nd, 2019, to be,

FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING AWARENESS WEEK

And urge all the citizens of the Commonwealth to take cognizance of this event and participate fittingly in its observance.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston, this fourth day of February, in the year two thousand and nineteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the two hundred and forty-second.

By His Excellency

Charles Baker
Governor of the Commonwealth

Karyn E. Polito
Lt. Governor of the Commonwealth

William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

God Save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts