

Suspend the Rules And Pass the Bill, H.R. 2140, with Amendments

(The amendments strike all after the enacting clause and insert a new text and a new title)

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2140

To prevent child marriage in United Nations-administered refugee settlements,
and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 8, 2019

Mrs. WAGNER (for herself and Mr. McCAUL) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To prevent child marriage in United Nations-administered
refugee settlements, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Preventing Child Mar-
5 riage in Displaced Populations Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) According to UNICEF, 12 million girls
2 marry before the age of 18 every year.

3 (2) Early marriage denies children, especially
4 girls, their right to make vital decisions about their
5 well-being, including relating to their health, family,
6 and career. Child brides are less likely to finish their
7 education, and are at higher risk for abuse, con-
8 tracting HIV, and dying while pregnant or giving
9 birth.

10 (3) Child marriage also imposes substantial eco-
11 nomic costs to developing countries, impeding devel-
12 opment and prosperity gains.

13 (4) Displaced populations are particularly vul-
14 nerable to child marriage, in communities where pov-
15 erty, instability, and displacement put pressure on
16 families to marry children, particularly young girls,
17 off at a young age.

18 (5) One United Nations (UN) study found that
19 child marriage rates were four times higher among
20 displaced Syrian refugees than among Syrians before
21 the crisis. This indicates that displacement, insta-
22 bility, and poverty are driving child marriages.

23 (6) United Nations agencies, including
24 UNICEF and UNHCR, have acknowledged the dan-

1 gers of child marriage and taken steps to address its
2 risk in the populations they serve.

3 (7) The UN Joint Program on Child Marriage
4 supports this work by building the resilience of pop-
5 ulations to indirectly prevent child marriage and by
6 generating new data and evidence on the prevalence
7 of child marriage in humanitarian and fragile set-
8 tings. For example, in Uganda, the UN Joint Pro-
9 gram on Child Marriage helped 27,000 adolescent
10 girls strengthen critical skills through school clubs
11 and Go Back to School campaigns, as well as life-
12 skills and financial literacy training.

13 (8) After the UN Joint Program on Child Mar-
14 riage identified Yemen as one of its focus countries,
15 65,000 people, of whom 45,000 are adolescents,
16 were reached with awareness raising activities on the
17 harms of child marriage in 2018 alone. As a result,
18 local council representatives, elders, and community
19 leaders from six districts signed a pledge to support
20 advocacy efforts to end child marriage.

21 **SEC. 3. PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE IN DISPLACED POP-**
22 **ULATIONS.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall direct the
24 United States Permanent Representative to the United
25 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United

1 States at the United Nations to call for an adoption of
2 an agreed-upon definition of “child marriage” across
3 United Nations agencies.

4 (b) STRATEGY.—The President shall direct the
5 United States Permanent Representative to the United
6 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United
7 States at the United Nations to call for the development
8 of a comprehensive strategy to address child marriage in
9 refugee settlements administered by the United Nations.
10 Such strategy should include the following:

11 (1) A mandate to regularly collect and report
12 data related to the number of known or suspected
13 child marriages taking place inside each such settle-
14 ment.

15 (2) Protocols for United Nations personnel re-
16 garding prevention and monitoring of child mar-
17 riages inside each such settlement.

18 (3) A description of United Nations programs
19 administered at such settlements that include—

20 (A) physical, mental, and emotional reha-
21 bilitation and support to children who have ex-
22 tricated themselves from child marriage; and

23 (B) alternatives to child marriage, such as
24 education initiatives.

1 (4) Protocols regarding how United Nations
2 personnel should—

3 (A) report adults participating in illegal
4 child marriages in each such settlement; and

5 (B) monitor the prosecution of such adults
6 by the authorities of the country in which the
7 settlement at issue is located.

8 (c) RESEARCH.—The President shall direct the
9 United States Permanent Representative to the United
10 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United
11 States at the United Nations to advocate for the United
12 Nations and its appropriate agencies to include, as appro-
13 priate, in all of its research into child marriage the rela-
14 tionship between child marriage and violence against girls,
15 including young children and infants.

16 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

17 (1) CHILD MARRIAGE.—The term “child mar-
18 riage” means a formal marriage or informal union
19 involving at least one person younger than age 18.

20 (2) ILLEGAL CHILD MARRIAGE.—The term “il-
21 legal child marriage” means a child marriage that is
22 illegal under the laws of the country in which the
23 child marriage occurs.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill To prevent
child marriage in refugee settlements administered by the
United Nations, and for other purposes.”.