



mgmbill.org

San Diego, California
comments@mgmbill.org
www.mgmbill.org

press release

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MGMbill.org Launches Website Promoting Bill to End Male Genital Mutilation (Circumcision) in the United States

SAN DIEGO, California - Today marks the debut of MGMbill.org, a non-profit organization whose goal is the enactment of a federal ban on male genital mutilation (MGM), commonly referred to as circumcision. MGMbill.org's website contains a proposed amendment to the U.S. Female Genital Mutilation Act of 1995, which outlawed female circumcision but gave no protection to males.

Despite the well documented damage that male circumcision causes each of its victims, it is still legal in the United States to mutilate the genitals of boys in the name of social custom, hygiene, religion, or for any other reason. With circumcision rates declining across the country as more information becomes available on the lifetime sexual consequences of the procedure, though, many activists feel that the time is ripe for a ban to be enacted.

Hess, who was circumcised as a baby 34 years ago, claims to have lost significant sexual feeling as a result of the procedure. "Before I was even aware that I was circumcised, I always thought that sex never felt quite right," said Hess. "Until the mid 1990's, there was very little information available on circumcision, and I had always assumed that circumcision was a tradition that only Jews practiced. I didn't learn that I myself was actually circumcised until my first year of college.

"Where I grew up, almost every penis I had ever seen was circumcised, so I just assumed that a circumcised penis was a natural penis. But as circumcision information and pictures became available on the Internet, I learned the full extent of what had been done to me. I became very angry, and I have thought about it every day since."

Hess, who says he suffered years of declining sexual feeling as a result of his circumcision, used the information he learned on the Internet to undergo a self-managed process known as non-surgical foreskin restoration. The process involves stretching the remaining shaft skin of a circumcised penis over the glans (the head of the penis) to grow new skin that mimics a foreskin, with beneficial effects.

"Even after four years of restoring, I still have not grown enough new skin to make it look like I have an intact penis," said Hess, "and unfortunately I will never be able to restore the specialized nerves that were cut away. But by keeping my glans continuously covered like a foreskin would do, the layers of keratinized skin that built up over my lifetime peeled away within a matter of months, allowing me to feel a whole range of sexual sensations that I had never experienced before. I also was able to stop using Viagra for the most part, which I often needed before I undertook the restoration process due to a lack of sexual feeling."

Hess is hopeful that a law to end male genital mutilation will be passed soon. "It is every person's birthright - female *and* male - to have their sexual organs left intact as nature intended," he said. "Most men who are circumcised have no idea how much sexual feeling they have lost as a result of circumcision, because it is all they have ever known. They believe what their doctors, friends, and coworkers tell them, which is typically that circumcision is harmless. But nothing could be further from the truth."

To ensure the protection of intersex individuals (those born with ambiguous or both male and female sex organs), Hess's bill includes a provision prohibiting the mutilation of ambiguous and hermaphroditic genitalia. The bill also prohibits premature forcible retraction of an intact foreskin, which can lead to genital infections, scarring, and other problems.

The bill also borrows provisions from the United Kingdom's Female Genital Mutilation Act of 2003 by increasing the maximum punishment of an offense to 14 years imprisonment (from the current maximum imprisonment time of 5 years), and by making it a crime for any person in the U.S. to assist or facilitate the practice of genital mutilation, either domestically or while traveling to other countries.