

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE
MATTHEW E. BAKER**

ROOM 115 RYAN OFFICE BUILDING
PO BOX 202068
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2068
PHONE: (717) 772-5371
FAX: (717) 705-1850

DISTRICT OFFICES:
74 MAIN STREET
WELLSBORO, PA 16901
PHONE: (570) 724-1390
FAX: (570) 724-2168

430 CANTON STREET, SUITE 6
TROY, PA 16947
PHONE: (570) 297-3045
FAX: (570) 297-5551



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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APPOINTMENTS
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BOARD OF GOVERNORS
PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS
PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL

January 25, 2010

Peter Keay
Pennsylvania State Office
[REDACTED]
West Chester, PA [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Keay:

Thank you for contacting me about your interest in legislation that would prohibit male circumcision. I am always appreciative when interested citizens take the time to express their views to me.

As you are aware, circumcision of the male infant is a controversial issue on which there is no consensus at the state and federal level. In addition, it seems that the medical community is unable to formulate a clear and unequivocal position as well. Due to the complexity of this matter, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued a revised policy statement in 1999 regarding circumcision. In summary, AAP states:

“Existing scientific evidence demonstrates potential medical benefits of newborn male circumcision; however, these data are not sufficient to recommend routine neonatal circumcision. In the case of circumcision, in which there are potential benefits and risks, yet the procedure is not essential to the child's current well-being, parents should determine what is in the best interest of the child. To make an informed choice, parents of all male infants should be given accurate and unbiased information and be provided the opportunity to discuss this decision. It is legitimate for parents to take into account cultural, religious, and ethnic traditions, in addition to the medical factors, when making this decision.”

Currently, there is no statute in Pennsylvania that requires male infants to be circumcised: it is entirely a voluntary decision made by parents based on their own particular views and beliefs. When parents disagree on whether or not to perform the procedure, they have the ability to ask the courts to rule on the matter.

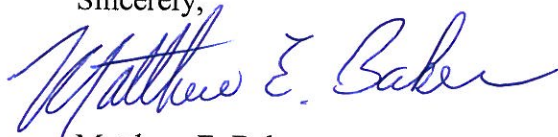
At present, there is no federal law that addresses male genital mutilation or circumcision. Although draft language for a bill prohibiting male genital mutilation was submitted to Congress in 2005 from a California-based health and human rights organization, so far no member of Congress has sponsored such legislation.

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I am forwarding your letter to my staff on the state House Health and Human Services Committee for inclusion in the committee file on this issue. Your input will be valuable in future policy discussions concerning this matter. If you would like to view and track any state legislative proposal, please visit the General Assembly's website at www.legis.state.pa.us.

Again, thank you for your letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me whenever I can be of service in matters relating to state government.

Sincerely,



Matthew E. Baker
State Representative
68th Legislative District

MEB:plh