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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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July 5, 2004

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VETERANS  
SUBCOMMITTEE:  
BENEFITS

Mr. Matthew R. Hess

~~████████████████████~~  
San Diego, CA ~~██████████~~

Dear Matthew,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about male genital mutilation and interest in seeing legislation to prohibit this practice. I appreciate your work on this issue and apologize for the delay in my response. Since I attempt to answer as many letters as I can, I am sometimes unable to reply as quickly as I would like.

Your level of commitment to changing current policy is admirable; you have obviously given this issue a great deal of thought. I believe the most important work occurs at the grassroots level and your efforts are helping to reshape existing attitudes towards circumcision.

Traditionally, families have made their decision regarding male circumcision based on their religious, cultural and even public health beliefs. Within the Jewish community, the *Brit Milah* or circumcision ceremony is an important initiation rite marking a covenant between man and God.

Speaking as both a mother and grandmother, I believe parents should feel secure with the reasons for their decision. All parents deserve to receive thorough information and surely should not feel pressured in any way if they are uncertain. The Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists are united in their support of providing parents with accurate and unbiased information, encouraging discussion of the associated risks and benefits with circumcision and the use of pain relief.

Since circumcision remains optional, I believe increased dialogue can effectively address the concerns you shared in your letter. Your work presents another side to this discussion and will allow parents to make an informed choice.

Again, thank you for taking the time to share your perspective on this matter. As your representative, I both need and value your thoughts and ideas.

With warm regards,

  
SUSAN A. DAVIS  
Member of Congress