

Delaware Becomes the First State in the Nation to Ban Marriage for Those Under 18



JUNE 23, 2018 -- Gov. John Carney this week signed into law legislation prohibiting marriage for anyone under the age of 18, regardless of circumstances.

[The bill](#) narrowly passed the House of Representatives in mid-April garnering 23 "yes" votes in the 41-member chamber.

Critics at the time had argued that Delaware's existing law already restricted the ability of minors to marry, requiring a parent or guardian to seek permission by petitioning Family Court on the minor's behalf. The law also mandated that the judge consider the best interests of the minor; the wishes of the minor's parents or guardians; the mental and physical health of the individuals seeking marriage; and any other factors he or she thought was appropriate in rendering a decision.

During the House debate, the bill's proponents were unable to cite any instance where the existing law had been abused. The American Civil Liberties Union opposed an identical bill in California on the grounds it would needlessly restrict marriage and would precluded the consideration of circumstances where such a union might be in the best interests of those involved.

The law takes effect immediately.