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# Religious groups oppose male circumcision ban for San Francisco

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An organized opposition group representing three religions will attempt to block a November ballot measure that would ban the circumcision of boys under 18 in San Francisco.

On Tuesday, city resident Lloyd Schofield submitted more than the 7,168 signatures needed to put the ban on the ballot, and if the Department of Elections certifies the proposal in 30 days, it will officially be up to voters. The measure would make circumcising a minor a misdemeanor carrying a \$1,000 fine and up to a year in jail.

Schofield likens circumcision — a common religious practice for Jewish and Muslim boys — to widely condemned female-circumcision practices in Africa. Abby Porth, the associate director of the Jewish Community Relations Council, resents the comparison.

“We do take this seriously,” Porth said. “We find it deeply offensive.”

She doesn’t think the measure will pass, but Porth said the ballot language could be deceiving to voters who might be against “forced genital cutting.”

Porth said the San Francisco InterFaith Council, which includes Muslim and Christian groups, will throw all its weight behind opposition to the measure. She said it will first pursue legal recourse that raises conflicts between the measure and constitutional rights of religious freedom, then a public affairs campaign will follow.

The San Jose-based Islamic Networks Group also sees the ban as restrictive.

“It definitely does cross the line of religious freedom,” said Ameena Jandali, the group’s co-founder. “Other cities could consider it too.”

Dan Sandman, the director of the San Francisco Anti-Defamation League, said The City’s religious leaders will overwhelmingly agree to fight against a threat to ritual.

“This is an important tradition, and when it comes to an attack on religion, or choice, I think Muslims, Jews, Christians will all respond,” Sandman said. “This is a time to come together.”

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Local circumcision ban Dan Sandman Lloyd Schofield male circumcision san francisco San Francisco InterFaith Council

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