



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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March 15, 2021

Senator Tim Scott
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Mike Kelly
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Scott and Representative Kelly,

As chairmen of pertinent committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we write in strong support of your bills, S. 656 and H.R. 1750, the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2021.

Child welfare providers, who serve the needs and rights of children regardless of background, enjoy the cherished freedom of religious liberty like all Americans. The Inclusion Act protects the freedom of all child welfare providers, and by extension their beneficiaries, by ensuring they will not be discriminated against by the government because of their religious beliefs or moral convictions. The Act prevents the federal government and states that receive federal funds for child welfare services from excluding providers who believe that children deserve to be placed with a married mother and father. This exclusion has already happened in Massachusetts, Illinois, California, New York, the District of Columbia, and is in progress or litigation in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and at the federal level. In each of these places, religious agencies have been or are being driven out of offering adoption and foster care services due to their beliefs.

The Inclusion Act would remedy this unjust discrimination, and maximize the benefit to thousands of children in need, by enabling all foster care and adoption providers to serve parents and children in a manner consistent with the providers' religious beliefs and moral convictions. Adoptive and foster care parents, as well as women and men who want to place their children, ought to be able to choose an agency that shares their religious beliefs or convictions about the best interests of their children. The Inclusion Act recognizes and respects this parental choice. We regret to note that other legislative efforts, such as the Equality Act, would instead only deprive parents and children of the diversity of providers necessary to serve diverse communities.

We are pleased to support the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2021 and urge your colleagues to join S. 656 and H.R. 1750 as cosponsors. The freedom to serve in accord with one's religious beliefs and moral convictions is foundational to religious freedom in our nation. Thank you for introducing again this needed bill in Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim. Card. Dolan".

His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York
Chairman, Committee for Religious Liberty

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul S. Coakley".

Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley
Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bishop David A. Konderla".

Most. Rev. David A. Konderla
Bishop of Tulsa
Chairman, Subcommittee for the Promotion
and Defense of Marriage