



Religious Objections in MI Adoption – 2015

Current bills in the Michigan legislature are crafted to allow child placement agencies the right to assert moral or religious objections to deny foster and adoption placement.

Faith-based child placement agencies including those who receive state funding already have broad leeway in denying placement without meaningful oversight. The proposed legislation seeks to codify religious discrimination pertaining to child placement into Michigan law.

Given the long held standard of the state that placement should be in the "best interest of the child," there are three problematic consequences that would arise if this legislation becomes state law:

- 1) It would allow state funded child placement agencies the right to discriminate in child placement, narrowing the pool of families available for thousands of children awaiting foster care homes.
- 2) It would conflict with current Michigan civil rights laws that protect against discrimination based upon religious beliefs of prospective families pertaining to child placement.
- 3) It would give license to such agencies to make decisions regarding placement of children outside of the current legal standard that *child custody and adoptions must be granted on the best interests of children.*

Not only do all adoption placements in the state go through some 70 agencies, many of which are faith-based, but the state also contracts about 40% of all foster care placements through the same agencies. Within 2014 – 2015 alone, \$10 million went the faith-based agencies, which will have the legal right to discriminate based upon religion under this legislation.

As a faith based organization, we believe that religious organizations have the right to teach and adhere to moral and religious codes within their institutions that may appear to some as discriminatory. However, child placement agencies, including those which are faith-based, may not engage in discriminatory practices due to receiving direct funding through tax dollars, which defines them as acting as agents of the State of Michigan.