WHY YOU SHOULD OPPOSE BILLS THAT GIVE CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCIES A LICENSE TO DISCRIMINATE

Just like last year, many states may consider legislation that would allow child placement agencies to cite religion as an excuse to refuse to place children with certain parents, even if that placement would be in the best interest of the child. Those who support religious freedom should not support bills like these that could be used to harm others.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION IS A FUNDAMENTAL AMERICAN VALUE THAT IS PROTECTED BY THE FIRST AMENDMENT. It allows all of us the freedom to believe or not as we see fit, but it does not allow us to use religion as an excuse to harm or take away the rights of others. This also reflects a tenet of many different faith and secular traditions: We should treat others fairly, as we would like to be treated. Religion is no justification for allowing child placement agencies to deny children homes and discriminate against prospective parents.

THESE BILLS WOULD ALLOW ORGANIZATIONS THAT GET TAXPAYER FUNDS and that contract with the state to provide child placement services, to refuse to fulfill their obligations under the contract. If an organization cannot agree to serve all children and families regardless of religion, they should not accept government funding or enter into contracts with the state.

IGNORING BEST INTEREST: Generally, child placement agencies must prioritize the best interest of the child when making placement decisions. These bills would thwart this requirement by instead prioritizing the religious views of the child placement agency above the best interests of the child. As a result, the agencies could deny children the loving, stable, and permanent homes they deserve.

LITMUS TEST: Allowing government-funded organizations to refuse to place children with parents based on a religious litmus test is a clear violation of the principle that the government should never sanction discrimination.

UNDER THESE BILLS, CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCIES COULD IGNORE VARIOUS EXISTING STATE AND LOCAL LAWS THAT PROTECT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION, thus affecting many types of couples. Child placement agencies could refuse to place children in homes with any couple to which they have a religious objection, which could include couples who are interfaith, same-sex, previously divorced, or of a different faith than the agency.

ALL OF OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS DESERVE TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY AND BE TREATED FAIRLY AND EQUALLY. Allowing government-funded agencies to refuse to place children with certain families misuses religious freedom to sanction discrimination against couples who want to expand their family by providing a child with a safe and loving home.