



DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CATHOLIC ADOPTION SERVICES

USCCB Fact Sheet

2015

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY UNDER ATTACK

Concrete Examples

Local Catholic Charities agencies around the country have long provided adoption and foster care services to the neediest children. Catholic Charities agencies often take on the most difficult placements, including older, abused children and children with disabilities and special needs. When placing children with couples, Catholic Charities makes sure those children enjoy the advantage of having a mom and a dad who are married.

In 2006, Catholic Charities of Boston, which had been one of the nation's oldest adoption agencies, faced a very difficult choice: **violate its conscience, or close its doors.** In order to be licensed by the state, Catholic Charities of Boston would have to obey state laws barring "sexual orientation discrimination." And because marriage had been redefined in Massachusetts, Catholic Charities could not simply limit its placements to married couples. Catholic leaders asked the state legislature for a religious exemption but were refused. **As a result, Catholic Charities of Boston was forced to shut down its adoption services.**

Later that year, Catholic Charities in San Francisco faced a similar untenable choice and was forced to end its adoption services as well.

In Washington, DC, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington—which has provided support to children and families for over eighty years—had a partnership with the District of Columbia for its foster care and public adoption program. However, in 2010, a law redefining legal marriage to include two people of the same sex took effect

in the District. The District then informed Catholic Charities that it would no longer be an eligible foster care and adoption partner. Why? Because, as a Catholic organization, Catholic Charities was committed to placing children with married couples so that each child would have the experience of a mother and a father.

In 2011, Catholic Charities affiliates in Illinois closed down instead of complying with a new requirement that they could no longer receive state money if they refused to place children with persons in same-sex relationships as foster or adoptive parents. **"In the name of tolerance, we're not being tolerated,"** said Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois, a civil and canon lawyer who fought for Catholic Charities to retain its religious freedom.

Legislation called the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2015 (S. 667 / H.R. 1299) has recently been introduced in both Houses of Congress to try to remedy this problem and ensure that no adoption agencies are excluded from serving the most vulnerable children in our society.

Is our most cherished freedom truly under threat?

Among many current challenges, several state governments have sought to trample on the conscience rights of Catholic charitable service providers. Religious liberty is more than freedom of worship; it includes our ability to make our contribution to the common good of all Americans without having to compromise our faith. Without religious liberty properly understood, all Americans suffer, including the neediest children seeking adoptive and foster families.

What can you do to ensure the protection of religious freedom at home and abroad?

The U.S. Bishops have called for a Fortnight for Freedom from June 21 to July 4, 2015. Please visit www.fortnight4freedom.org for more information on this important time of prayer, education, and action in support of religious freedom!