



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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February 1, 2019

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

Dear Representative Kelly,

As the respective chairmen of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Committee for Religious Liberty, and Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, we write in strong support of your bipartisan bill, H.R. 897, the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2019.

Our first and most cherished freedom, religious liberty, is to be enjoyed by all Americans, including child welfare providers who serve the needs of children. The Inclusion Act protects the freedom of all child welfare providers 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 child welfare providers who believe that children deserve to be placed with a married mother and father. This exclusion has already happened in Massachusetts, Illinois, California, the District of Columbia, and is in progress or litigation in New York, 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 by enabling providers to serve parents and children in a manner consistent with the providers' religious beliefs and moral convictions. Women and men who want to place their children for adoption ought to be able to choose an agency that shares the parents' religious beliefs and moral convictions. The Inclusion Act recognizes and respects this parental choice.

We are pleased to support the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2019 and urge your colleagues to join H.R. 897 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 the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Joseph E. Kurtz in black ink.

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville
Chairman, Committee
for Religious Liberty

Handwritten signature of James D. Conley in blue ink.

Most Reverend James D. Conley
Bishop of Lincoln
Chairman, Subcommittee for the
Promotion and Defense of Marriage

Handwritten signature of Frank J. Dewane in black ink.

Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice
Chairman, Committee on
Domestic Justice and Human
Development