



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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March 9, 2015

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, Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, and Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, we write in strong support of your bill, H.R. 1299, the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2015.

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 most vulnerable members of society. Rightly, the Inclusion Act protects the religious liberties and moral convictions of all child welfare providers. No providers are excluded by the Act.

Specifically, the Inclusion Act prohibits discrimination by the federal government and state governments (and their subdivisions) against child welfare providers on the bases of their religious beliefs and moral convictions. The Act would prohibit the federal government and States that receive federal funds for child welfare services from *excluding* child welfare providers simply because the providers decline to provide a social service based upon their religious beliefs or moral convictions.

Unfortunately, in recent years, some religious child welfare providers in our country (including in Massachusetts, Illinois, California, and the District of Columbia) have been and continue to be excluded from carrying out adoption and foster care services because these providers believe that children deserve to be placed with a married mother and father. The Inclusion Act would remedy this unjust discrimination by enabling all providers to serve the needs of parents and children in a manner consistent with the providers' religious beliefs and moral convictions. Indeed, women and men who want to place their children for adoption ought to be able to choose from a diversity of adoption agencies, including those that share the parents' religious beliefs and moral convictions. The Inclusion Act recognizes and respects this parental choice.

We are, therefore, very pleased to support the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2015 and urge your colleagues to join H.R. 1299 as cosponsors. The freedom to serve in accord with one's religious beliefs and moral convictions is foundational to religious liberty in our nation. Thank you for introducing this needed bill in the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Thomas Wenski in black ink.

Most Reverend Thomas Wenski
Archbishop of Miami
Chairman, Committee on
Domestic Justice and Human
Development

Handwritten signature of William L. Lori in blue ink.

Most Reverend William Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee
for Religious Liberty

Handwritten signature of Salvatore J. Cordileone in black ink.

Most Reverend Salvatore Cordileone
Archbishop of San Francisco
Chairman, Subcommittee for the
Promotion and Defense of Marriage