



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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December 15, 2023

The Honorable Tim Scott
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Scott:

As the respective chairmen of committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we write in strong support of your bill, S. 3344, the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2023.

Religious liberty endures as a preeminent right in our nation which is enjoyed by child welfare service providers who serve the needs of children in accordance with their religious beliefs and moral convictions. Consistent with her mission, the Catholic Church seeks to uphold the dignity of the child and the family as a faith-based child welfare service provider nationwide.

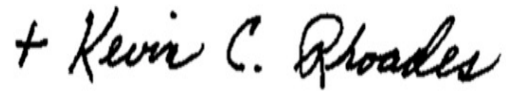
The Inclusion Act would ensure that faith-based organizations are not unjustly discriminated against on the basis of their deeply held religious beliefs and moral convictions. Specifically, the Act would prevent the refusal of the necessary government contracts or licensing to religious organizations who provide services to children in vulnerable situations on a religious or moral basis. In doing so, the Act would prohibit the federal government and states that receive federal funds from excluding child welfare service providers who believe that children are best served when placed with a married mother and father. It is regrettable that this exclusion has already happened in Massachusetts, Illinois, California, and the District of Columbia. 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. Adoptive and foster care parents, as well as women and men who place their children for adoption, ought to be able to choose an agency that shares their religious beliefs or convictions about the best interests of their children.

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court in *Fulton v. Philadelphia* upheld the free exercise of faith-based providers to serve the needs of children in a manner consistent with their religious and moral beliefs. The Inclusion Act will further secure these protections and promote the wellbeing of children and families who receive federally funded services.

We are pleased to reiterate our long standing support of the Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act of 2023 and urge your colleagues to join S. 3344 as cosponsors. Thank

you for reintroducing this bill in Congress and recognizing the important role of religious organizations in child welfare services.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kevin C. Rhoades in black ink.

Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades
Bishop of Fort Wayne- South Bend
Chairman, Committee for Religious Liberty

Handwritten signature of Robert E. Barron in blue ink.

Most Reverend Robert E. Barron
Bishop of Winona-Rochester
Chairman, Committee on Laity,
Marriage, Family Life, and Youth

Handwritten signature of Borys Gudziak in blue ink.

Most Reverend Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Chair, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development