

The Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI) and Voice for Adoption (VFA) seek to better the lives of everyone touched by adoption by providing leadership that improves laws, policies and practices through sound research, analysis, education and advocacy. Eliminating policy and practice barriers -- including obstacles faced by gay and lesbian individuals and couples -- to adoption for children in foster care waiting for homes is a key priority. As such, we are in opposition to HB 296, the Alabama Child Care Provider Inclusion Act.

This letter explains our opposition to this bill by providing the state of professional knowledge on the critical need for the largest possible pool of qualified parents to adopt children languishing in the child welfare system, and the harm to children that results from excluding any single qualified class of parents (such as gay and lesbian couples) from that pool. The DAI has conducted extensive studies on this issue, which can be found at [Adoption by Gays and Lesbians](#) publications page.

A quarter century of research has found that children raised by lesbian and gay parents fare well – on par with those reared by heterosexual parents. Major professional groups, including the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association, as well as national and state child welfare organizations, overwhelmingly support adoptions by qualified same-sex parents.

Studies have also documented that lesbian and gay adults are willing to adopt the very children most in need of homes and those who wait in temporary foster care the longest, those who are older and who may have special needs; these families also do so at a higher rate than heterosexual adults.

In Alabama alone, the most recent statistics demonstrate that 4,532 children are in foster care with 1,076 children waiting in care for permanent, loving families. Nationally, over 23,000 children aged out of foster care in 2013 without families. The outcomes facing youth who exit foster care on their own, rather than to a family, are staggering; these young people are more likely to flounder in society with higher rates of homelessness and unemployment compared to their peers who are adopted. These numbers and outcomes illustrate the critical need for the largest possible pool of qualified parents to adopt children from Alabama's child welfare system. Allowing agencies that serve waiting children to discriminate against prospective qualified parents undermines the prospects of Alabama's children being placed with permanent, loving families.

We urge you to examine the research that demonstrates if we truly wish to act in good conscience towards children waiting for permanent families, we must not exclude qualified and eager prospective foster and adoptive parents. Foster and adoptive parent applicants should be judged based on their qualifications, not their sexual orientation or gender identity. Legalizing such discrimination, on the other hand, will undermine the safety and well-being of Alabama's children. We urge you to stop this bill from advancing.

Thank you for your attention to ensuring Alabama's waiting children are placed with stable, loving families.

Sincerely,

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