

Kansas House of Representatives
8th Avenue between Harrison and Van Buren
Topeka, KS 66612

The undersigned nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations are dedicated to ensuring the safety, permanency and wellbeing for children and families that are connected to adoption and foster care. This includes providing leadership and education that improves laws, policies and practices through sound research, analysis and advocacy. Eliminating policy and practice barriers for children in foster care awaiting permanent homes is one of our priorities.

The Kansas House of Representatives may soon reconsider legislation that would significantly limit the opportunities for the more than 7,000 Kansas children waiting in foster care to be placed in permanent, adoptive homes. This bill – HB 2481— would, as amended by the Senate, make it harder for kids to find foster and adoptive families by creating a license to discriminate - that is, allowing child welfare service providers to accept government funds but refuse to work with LGBTQ individuals, same-sex families, or other qualified prospective parents who don't meet their religious criteria.

Making a placement in the best interest of each child should be the state's primary goal. No one's interest is served when discriminatory practices are endorsed by the state. HB 2481's discriminatory Senate amendment stands in opposition to the robust base of professional knowledge that highlights the critical need for the largest possible pool of potentially qualified parents to adopt children languishing in the child welfare system, and the harm to children that results from excluding any single class of potentially qualified parents (such as LGBTQ people) from that pool.

The reality is, a quarter century of research has found that children raised by lesbian and gay parents fare just as well as those reared by heterosexual parents. Child welfare professionals, 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. There is no professional justification for refusing to allow a same-sex couple or LGBTQ individual to adopt.

There are all too many children in temporary living situations, and the biggest issue in terms of placing children in homes is a lack of qualified prospective parents. In Kansas alone, the most recent statistics indicate that there are 7,100 children in foster care, with 458 children waiting for placement with an adoptive family. The outcomes facing youth who exit foster care on their own as opposed to being placed with a permanent 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 illustrate the critical need for the largest possible pool of potentially qualified parents to adopt children from the child welfare system.

Stability and security are vital for children's healthy development. Allowing agencies that serve children waiting for homes to discriminate against potentially qualified parents limits opportunities for children.

If we truly wish to act in good conscience towards children in care, we must not enshrine discriminatory practices into the law.

Signed,

Human Rights Campaign
Equality Kansas

ACLU of Kansas
Child Welfare League of America
North American Council on Adoptable Children
National Center for Adoption and Permanency
Foster Club
Voice For Adoption
FosterAdopt Connect
Kansas Appleseed
Children's Alliance of Kansas