

LEGISLATIVE ALERT: CATHOLIC CHARITIES
ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE PROGRAMS AT RISK

Since 1921, Catholic Charities has been providing foster care and adoption services for children and families. We provide **20%** of the foster care/adoption services in Illinois and have connected around **3,700** of the state's abused and neglected children with loving families over the last 10 years at substantial cost savings to taxpayers. We are committed to these abused and neglected children because it is integral to our mission and our faith.

What's At Stake: Unless more explicit language reflecting the legislative intent of the Illinois Religious Freedom and Civil Union Act is enacted, faith-based agencies will be at risk of impending legal action that aims to close their doors. This will lead to an unnecessary disruption in the lives of thousands of children in Illinois foster care.

Solution: The remedy to this situation can easily be accomplished via legislation designed to assure that faith-based agencies are allowed to maintain our religious identity and continue to provide foster care and adoption services AND to ensure civil union couples have unfettered access to foster care and adoption licensing services.

Legislation: This proposed legislation has been portrayed as discriminatory. Nothing could be further from the truth.

- This legislation **DOES NOT**:
 - Ban civil union couples from becoming foster or adoptive parents in any way.
 - Infringe on the benefits afforded civil union partners under Illinois' civil union law.
 - Reduce the available pool of available foster and adoptive homes to children.
 - Prevent children from being placed into loving, caring foster or adoptive homes
- This legislation **DOES**:
 - Clarify the intent of the civil union law approved last year, which clearly states: "Nothing in this act shall interfere with or regulate the religious practice of any religious body."
 - Allow faith-based agencies to continue to provide efficient and quality care and respect the strong public/private partnership between the state and faith-based organizations to meet these great needs.
 - Ensure there's no disruption for thousands of vulnerable children and families served ably by faith-based agencies.

The Catholic Church has been a committed partner for decades to serve the children truly in need. We take this calling extremely seriously and will stand up against those who use constitutional gamesmanship to put these children and families in harm's way.

We hope you will stand with us and embrace the good we do for so many in Illinois.