



DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CATHOLIC ADOPTION SERVICES

USCCB Fact Sheet

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RELIGIOUS LIBERTY UNDER ATTACK A Concrete Example

Local Catholic Charities agencies around the country have long provided adoption and foster care services to the neediest children. Catholic Charities agencies often take on the most difficult placements, including older, abused children and children with disabilities and special needs. When placing children with couples, Catholic Charities makes sure those children enjoy the advantage of having a mom and a dad who are married.

In 2006, Catholic Charities of Boston, which had been one of the nation's oldest adoption agencies, faced a very difficult choice: **violate its conscience, or close its doors.** In order to be licensed by the state, Catholic Charities of Boston would have to obey state laws barring "sexual orientation discrimination." And because marriage had been redefined in Massachusetts, Catholic Charities could not simply limit its placements to married couples. Catholic leaders asked the state legislature for a religious exemption but were refused. **As a result, Catholic Charities of Boston was forced to shut down its adoption services.**

Later that year, Catholic Charities San Francisco faced a similar untenable choice and was forced to end its adoption services as well.

In Washington, DC, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington—which has provided support to children and families for over eighty years—had a partnership with the District of Columbia for its foster care and public adoption program. However, in 2010, a law legalizing same-

sex marriage in the District took effect. The District then informed Catholic Charities that it would no longer be an eligible foster care and adoption partner. Why? Because, as a Catholic organization, Catholic Charities was committed to placing children with couples consisting only of a mother and a father who are married. Concerned District residents appealed to bring the issue of marriage before voters so that they could have a voice in the debate, but the D.C. Board of Elections repeatedly denied voters' request to put marriage on the ballot.

Most recently, Catholic Charities affiliates in Illinois closed down instead of complying with a new requirement that they can no longer receive state money if they refuse to place children with same-sex couples as foster or adoptive parents. **"In the name of tolerance, we're not being tolerated,"** said Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois, a civil and canon lawyer who fought for Catholic Charities to retain its religious freedom in Illinois.

Is our most cherished freedom truly under threat?

Among many current challenges, several state governments have sought to trample on the conscience rights of Catholic charitable service providers. Religious liberty is more than freedom of worship; it includes our ability to make our contribution to the common good of all Americans without having to compromise our faith. Without religious liberty properly understood, all Americans suffer, including the neediest children seeking adoptive and foster families.

What can you do to ensure the protection of religious freedom?

Text the word "Freedom" to 377377 for updates from the bishops on current threats to religious liberty. Also, please visit www.usccb.org/freedom for more information on how you can take action to protect religious liberty!