

May 3, 2018

Dear Lawmaker:

We, the undersigned faith leaders and organizations, write with great concern about SB 284 (formerly HB 2481) as amended by the Senate. We write to ask that you vote against SB 284 unless the Senate's harmful amendment is stripped--which the report out of conference does not do.

If passed as amended, SB 284 would permit child welfare agencies that receive taxpayer dollars and participate in government-supported child welfare services to discriminate against children and prospective parents. As such, the bill would allow these agencies to ignore the best interests of the children they agree to serve. We oppose the use of taxpayer dollars to subsidize discrimination and reject the idea that government-funded child welfare agencies should enjoy a blanket exemption from professional standards and practices that emphasize that every placement must, first and foremost, be made with the best interest of the child in mind.

Permitting taxpayer dollars to subsidize discriminatory practices such as this will hurt children in need of loving and supportive homes. There are more than 7,200 children in the Kansas foster care system, approximately 2,400 of whom are eligible for adoption. In 2015, nearly 355 Kansas youth "aged out" of the foster care system, leaving them at a higher risk for poverty, homelessness, incarceration, and early parenthood than youth adopted while in foster care. This bill will make it harder for the children of the Kansas foster care system to find their forever home.

As people of faith and faith-based organizations, we celebrate the important work of so many faith-based child welfare agencies that support foster youth. We are also deeply committed to religious freedom, but that freedom doesn't give anyone the right to impose their beliefs on others, or to put children in harm's way. To argue that religious freedom justifies the use of taxpayer dollars to discriminate against children and prospective parents is a distortion of such freedom, and a misunderstanding of civil rights law.

We are partners in the sacred work of those faith-based child welfare agencies seeking to unite children with forever families and share their calling to build a world of wholeness and compassion. Further, our values as Americans and as people of faith compel us to ensure that every child finds their forever home, and that every family that can provide a safe, supportive, and loving home for a child is matched with the child that will make their family whole.

Again, we urge you to reject the discriminatory language proffered by the Senate as well as by the conference committee. Please do not allow the harms added to SB 284 to become law.

Sincerely,

**Kansas Faith Leaders and Organizations (51)**

Rabbi Daniel Kirzane, The Temple, Congregation B'nai Jehudah, Overland Park

Rev. Rich Shockey, Church of the Nazarene, Lenexa

Reverend Adrienne Showalter Matlock, Risen Lamb International Church of the Nazarene,  
Kansas City, KS

Rev. Kurt Cooper, United Methodist Campus Ministry Emporia State University, Emporia

Rev. Christopher Eshelman, UMC, Pretty Prairie, KS

Rev. Boone D. Clayton, Presbyterian Church (USA), Manhattan

Pastor Susan Peach, First Baptist Church, Olathe

Pastor Jay Peach, First Baptist Church of Olathe, Olathe  
 Rev. Lora L. Andrews, Grace United Methodist Church, Winfield  
 Reverend Keith A. Phillips, Presbyterian Church (USA), Salina  
 Rev. Ashley Prescott Barlow-Thompson, United Methodist Church, Wichita  
 The Very Rev. A. Patrick Funston, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Manhattan  
 Maria Penrod, United Methodist Church, Overbrook  
 Reverend Amanda L. Baker, United Methodist, Marion  
 Rev. Kati Collins, PCUSA, Manhattan  
 Rev. Caela Simmons Wood, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Manhattan  
 Rev. Rebecca Goltry Mohr, Wichita First United Methodist Church  
 Rev. Melanie Martin, First UMC, Manhattan  
 Shaun-Michael Morse, Seminary Student, Table of Hope Metropolitan Community Church, Wichita  
 Rev. Jill Sander-Chali, United Methodist Church, Wichita  
 Reverend William S. Vincent, Jr., Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Wamego  
 Chelsea Shrack, Campus Minister, Wesley at Kansas State University  
 Rev. Sheridan Irick, Partridge Community Church UCC, Partridge  
 Rev. Adam Barlow-Thompson, Neighboring Movement, Wichita  
 Tobias Schlingensiepen, First Congregational Church UCC, Topeka  
 Rev. Rob Santel, Church of the Nazarene, Olathe  
 David Woosley, Priest, Community of Christ, Lawrence  
 Rev. Joanna Harader, Peace Mennonite Church, Lawrence  
 Rev. William B. Rose-Heim, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Overland Park  
 Pastor Beth Wilke, United Methodist, Winfield  
 Zen Master Judy Roitman, Kansas Zen Center, Lawrence  
 Rev. Kyle Reynolds, United Methodist, Olathe  
 Rev. Martha McDougal, Osawatomie First United Methodist, Osawatomie  
 Rev. Kent H. Little, College Hill United Methodist Church, Wichita  
 Rev. Denise Dugan, Saint Andrew Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Olathe  
 Rev. Cynthia Meyer, Central Congregational Church UCC, Topeka  
 Rev. Michael L. Strickland, First Baptist Church of Atchison, Atchison  
 Rabbi Dr. Mark H. Levin, Congregation Beth Torah, Overland Park  
 Rabbi Debbie Stiel, Temple Beth Sholom (Topeka)  
 Rabbi Javier E. Cattapan, Congregation Beth Torah, Overland Park  
 ADL-CRC  
 Jewish Family Services of Greater Kansas City  
 National Council of Jewish Women - Kansas City Section  
 Mercy and Justice Team Great Plains Annual Conference UMC  
 Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Manhattan  
 Ecumenical Campus Ministries, Kansas State University  
 Carbondale Community UCC  
 Central Congregational Church UCC, Topeka  
 United Church of Christ Kansas-Oklahoma Conference  
 Colonial Church in Prairie Village  
 UU Fellowship of Topeka  
*\*Affiliations are listed for identification purposes*

### **National and Statewide Faith-Based Organizations (39)**

African American Ministers In Action-Equal Justice Task Force  
 Ameinu  
 As the Spirit Moves Us

Avodah  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action  
Catholics for Choice  
Columbia Theological Seminary  
DignityUSA  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance  
Equal Partners in Faith  
Faith in Public Life  
Faith Matters Network  
The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries  
Global Faith & Justice Project  
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches  
Institute for Welcoming Resources  
Integrity USA - The Episcopal Rainbow  
Intersections International  
Interfaith Alliance  
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action  
Jewish Community Action  
Keshet  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
Muslims for Progressive Values  
National Coalition of American Nuns  
National Council of Jewish Women  
New Ways Ministry  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Religious Institute  
SOJOURN  
Tivnu: Building Justice  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
Uri L'Tzedek: Orthodox Social Justice  
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)  
The Workmen's Circle  
YATOM: The Jewish Foster & Adoption Network