



March 27, 2018

Representative Mike Lee, Chair
Colorado House Judiciary Committee

RE: HB 18-1206

Dear Chairman Lee & Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am an attorney and the Vice President of Strategy for Family Policy Alliance, a public policy partner of Focus on the Family. We serve a national alliance of over 40 state-based family policy organizations, of which Colorado Family Action is a member. Family Policy Alliance and our allied organizations represent millions of families, churches, and Christian businesses nationwide, including nearly 20,000 in Colorado.

We appreciate your taking time to consider HB 1206. People of faith aren't just Christians or Muslims or Hindus on their Holy Days—their faith impacts everything they do, from work to play, from raising a family to taking up a hobby. That's why we believe protecting religious freedom is critical in every aspect of life, but we're especially grateful that Representative Humphrey has chosen to highlight how faith impacts providing adoption or foster care in Colorado.

Recently, the Colorado Department of Human Services passed new regulations that went relatively unnoticed until now. These regulations took effect in October and will impact primarily faith-based adoption agencies. Bear in mind that Colorado has 216 adoption agencies, licensed and in good standing by the state. Of those, about 16 are faith-based agencies.

These agencies are private and primarily facilitate private adoptions. What's amazing about these agencies is that because they consider their work to be an embodiment of their faith, they will often specialize in placing some of the most difficult-to-place children—including children with special needs, or children born addicted to drugs. What's even more amazing is that these agencies will often walk alongside birth moms—even if they decide to keep their baby—providing counselling, baby clothes, even rent and gas money. And, these agencies ultimately provide a service to children in need and our state by facilitating private adoptions that ease the burden on the foster care system. Many of the children for whom they find families would be born into the foster system if not for an adoption arranged before birth to give the child a permanent family.

Colorado's new regulations would require faith-based agencies to operate in a way that violates the very faith that motivates their work in order to conform with the State's beliefs—or else close their doors. But, Colorado isn't the only state to address this issue. Four states have already passed laws similar to Representative Humphrey's bill

8655 Explorer Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80920

P 719.278.4400

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specifically protecting their faith-based adoption agencies, and two more states, Kansas and Georgia, are also considering similar legislation this year. A bill has even been introduced at the federal level, backed by a strong secular and interfaith coalition, recognizing that faith-based adoption agencies serve a critical role in every state and that the children served by these agencies are far more important than any political agenda.

Forcing up to 16 adoption agencies out of the state will come at a cost—approximately 300-500 kids per year—who will not be served or who will land in the already backed-up foster care system. ***Is it worth it?***

We strongly urge you to pass H.B. 1206 in order to undo the harmful regulations passed by the Department of Human Services last year and to prevent the hundreds of children served by faith-based agencies in Colorado every year from paying the price for overly broad and unnecessary regulations.

Sincerely,



Autumn Leva, Esq.
Vice President, Strategy

Cc: Rep. Joseph Salazar, Vice Chair; Rep. Adrienne Benavidez; Rep. Terri Carver; Rep. Mike Foote; Rep. Leslie Herod; Rep. Paul Lundeen; Rep. Jovan Melton; Rep. Mike Weissman; Rep. Yeulin Willett; Rep. Cole Wist

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