



July 17, 2018

Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee

Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee

Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee

Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairman Shelby and Senator Leahy:

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Congresswoman Lowey:

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) writes to ask the leaders of Congress to reject a recent amendment added to the House Appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, offered by Congressman Robert Aderholt. We believe this amendment, offered as a way promote religious beliefs will in fact hurt children and youth in foster care and parents in foster care, kinship care and adoptive families.

CWLA, as a nearly 100-year-old national organization that develops standards of best practices to promote the best interests of children in foster care and to strengthen adoptions and relative care (kinship) is concerned that this amendment will undercut those best interests and deny placements in families.

CWLA shares Congress's concerns about recent trends across the United States related to the increasing prescription drug and heroin use and its resulting increases in foster care placements across the fifty states. We know we do not have enough foster and adoptive parents and these national trends will only increase the pressure and need for more families. There are more than 437,000 children in foster care in the United States; 118,000 of these children are waiting for a family to adopt them. This is not the time for Congress to add legislative language to an appropriations bill that will have the effect of allowing some agencies to turn away parents and caregivers.

We oppose policies and practices that categorically discriminate against prospective parents, including but not limited to discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual

orientation, religion, marital status, family size, disability, medical condition, geographic location, employment status, occupation, and educational attainment.

We support making decisions about approving prospective parents and matching children who are waiting to be adopted on a case-by-case basis, based on the strengths of the family, safety of the home, and best interests of each child.

To assure that agencies are guided by these strength-based policies and practices, we oppose policies that treat youth who identify as LGBTQ unequally and/or subject them to discredited and/or abusive therapeutic techniques. All youth deserve to be raised in an environment in which they are affirmed and supported in developing a healthy identity. CWLA is greatly concerned that this amendment will allow such practices and cause harm to the disproportionate share of children and youth who identify as LGBTQ.

Faith-based organizations have always played a key provider role in child welfare as well as other human services including child care, long term care and refugee assistance. Some advocates have sought to create a wedge within these communities by trying to define personal prejudices as religious or moral freedom. The way this legislation is constructed would also allow for religious discrimination.

We urge you to reject this amendment so that we can continue the recent progress Congress has made regarding child welfare services through the recent authorizations and appropriations from earlier this year.

Again, thank you for your support and interest in child welfare and the families, children and youth affected by these policies and practices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine James Brown".

Chris James-Brown
President and CEO