



Testimony of Michelle L. Martin
Proponent for HB 2687
March 20, 2018

I am Michelle Martin, and I have served as the Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Salina since December of 2013, and thank you for allowing me to offer comments in support of *The Adoption Protection Act*. Like many of the Catholic Charities across the nation, the agency I represent has a long history of being involved with adoptions. This connection to adoptions started even prior to the original incorporation of our agency on January 29, 1959. The priests and nuns who were instrumental in the establishment of the Catholic Charities within the Salina Diocese had been committed to the running of the orphanage in Abilene. We value this deeply rooted tradition of being a certified adoption agency and strongly want to continue existing as a service provider as such falls squarely within our mission to assist the poor and vulnerable. Despite our agency's earnest desire to continue our adoption program, we fear that future administrative changes could someday lead to the state not renewing our license or effectively closing our program for an inability to comply with mandated changes. The nation's political and legal climate corroborate these fears. Catholic Charities supports this legislative initiative so as to preserve its *right to choose* which families best align within the tenets of its program and religious convictions and which families would best be served by other agencies.

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This proposed legislation does *not* constitute a major deviation in current policies, but seeks merely to preserve and protect the rights of Catholic Charities and other similarly situated agencies. With such protections in place, then our agency could consider expanding its role in adoption services. As a former Guardian ad Litem and prosecutor of CINC cases, I understand first-hand the tremendous need to recruit more families into adoption and foster services. Without the backing of clear legislation, the looming threat of litigation and the potential for future administrative actions will continue to stifle our agency's ability to become more involved with the adoption process and assist with finding vulnerable children the "forever families" they so deserve.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our position and for your dedicated service.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle L. Martin