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Statement by the Catholic Bishops of Kansas
In Support of the *Adoption Protection Act*, HB 2687
March 20, 2018

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for holding this hearing.

Over a century before Kansas achieved statehood, and decades before the American founding, the Catholic Church was serving the poor, the needy, and the orphan on these shores. For three hundred years, our charitable endeavors have served the common good by ministering to the most vulnerable among us, including children in need of a “forever home.” The Adoption Protection Act will ensure that Catholic Charities and adoption providers from other faith traditions will remain free to serve, as they have so well for so long.

It is disappointing that this legislation is necessary, but experience in other states shows that it is. In recent years, government agencies have forced Catholic Charities to close their adoption ministries in Boston, Washington DC, Illinois, and San Francisco because of their policy of placing children only in homes with a married mother and father. Catholic Charities’ adoption ministry in Boston was one of the oldest in the country and had a strong reputation for being able to place hard-to-place children, such as older children or special needs children. Faith-based providers often specialize in handling challenging situations, so to lose their expertise would be a blow to the children and families they serve. Nonetheless, these other jurisdictions enforced their closure. We do not want such a scenario to ever occur in Kansas.

Groups hostile to faith-based adoption providers are becoming increasingly litigious, creating a climate of fear and uncertainty. Make no mistake, closing down adoption providers does not increase access for anyone. However, were the state to pass these protections, it is altogether likely that faith-based providers would increase their services. By having a diversity of providers operating in Kansas, we can maximize the number of children and families served. A diverse society should welcome a diversity of perspectives among adoption providers.

The rights of birthmothers and adoptive parents should not be forgotten in this discussion. It

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often happens that a birthmother wants her child to be raised in a home that shares her faith. Political activists who do not agree with her religious beliefs should not be able to stand in the door and thwart her wishes. Sometimes a birthmother's decision to place her child for adoption is based on her desire for the child to have the benefit of a mother and a father, something she may not be able to provide at that moment in her life. Such extraordinary selflessness should command society's awe and support.

Much the same, there are adoptive parents who for a variety of reasons wish to work with faith-based providers. The government should not be allowed to stand in the way of their choice, as has unfortunately happened elsewhere. That fact that faith-based providers may operate according to religious criteria that not everyone agrees with should be expected in a diverse society. Under the criteria employed by Catholic Charities, we the Catholic bishops of Kansas are not eligible to adopt children. We can assure you that this is not because Catholic Charities bears any ill will against bishops.

Seven states have laws like the legislation before you. None of those laws have taken away anyone's legal right to adopt. Rather, they have simply ensured that faith-based providers can continue to serve their communities in accordance with their religious principles.

If our opponents are successful in their efforts, America will become a place where even Mother Teresa would be forbidden from carrying out her adoption ministry. That is anything but tolerance.

We strongly support the Adoption Protection Act and thank you for your consideration.

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