As faith leaders we believe that all children need loving homes. The decisions that guide children in care through the foster and adoption process should prioritize the best interests of children above all other interests. That is why we are greatly concerned as more and more states pursue policies that would use religion to discriminate against prospective foster parents and children in need of loving homes.

Several states have already enacted laws that permit child welfare agencies that receive taxpayer dollars to provide child welfare services to discriminate against children and prospective parents. We oppose the use of taxpayer dollars to subsidize discrimination and we believe that children and families who need each other should not have to pass a religious litmus test in order to be family.

All government-funded child welfare agencies must make decisions with the best interest of the child in mind. Yet, permitting taxpayer dollars to subsidize discrimination will hurt children in need of loving and supportive homes. These policies put the interests of taxpayer-funded providers above the best interests of children in care. There are more than 100,000 children in the United States in need of adoption and over 400,000 in foster care. These policies are an unnecessary and harmful impediment to uniting children with caring and safe families.

As faith leaders, we celebrate the important work of so many faith-based child welfare agencies that support youth in foster care and families. 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. Our commitment to the sacred work of uniting every child in need with a family who can provide a safe, supportive and loving home compels us to stand against policies that use religion to discriminate.

Sincerely,

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<td>Rev. Dr. Neil Cazares-Thomas</td>
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<td>Rabbi Emeritus Joshua Chasan</td>
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<td>Mr. Francis Debernardo</td>
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<td>Sister Lynn Deeves</td>
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Bethel/Philadelphia United Methodist Churches  
Rock Hill, SC

Sandy Sypherd  
Lay Missioner Methodist  
Grace United Methodist Church  
Hastings, NE

Rev. Gregg Taylor  
Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church  
Houston, TX

Amy Taylor  
Director of Missions  
St. Paul’s United Methodist Church  
Houston, TX

Elder Sylvia Thorson-Smith  
St. Mark's Presbyterian Church  
Tucson, AZ

Pastor Gary Tolbert  
Seventh-day Adventist Church  
Mountain Home, NC

Minister Tamara Torres  
Woodfords Congregational Church  
Portland, ME

Rev. Brenda Torrie  
First United Methodist Church  
Newcastle, WY

Rev. Carlos Uroza  
Primera Iglesia Metodista  
Nashville, TN

Rev. Jay Voorhees  
City Road Chapel United Methodist Church  
Madison, TN

Pastor Douglas Walker  
Tyer Temple United Methodist Church  
Tampa, FL

Congregate Linda Walls  
Cathedral of Hope  
Mesquite, TX

Kristin Warthen  
Associate Pastor  
White's Chapel United Methodist Church  
Fort Worth, TX

Rev. Dr. Naomi Washington-Leapheart  
Adjunct faculty, Theology and Religious Studies  
Villanova University  
Philadelphia, PA

Faith Work Director  
National LGBTQ Task Force  
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi Elyse Wechterman  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
Abington, PA

Rabbi Alex Weissman  
Brown RISD Hillel  
Providence, RI
Rev. Mark Wendorf
United Church of Christ, Union Congregational Church
Sanford, ME

Rev. Walt Westbrook
Remington United Methodist Church
Elkwood, VA

Rev. John Weston
Unitarian Universalist Association, Retired
Chapel Hill, NC

Rev. John Weston
Unitarian Universalist Association, Retired
Chapel Hill, NC

Bishop Shelley Wickstrom
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
Alaska Synod
Anchorage, AK

Rev. David Wiggs
United Methodist
Boston Avenue Church
Tulsa, OK

Rev. Mary Wile
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Brunswick, ME

Sarah Wilke
Executive Director
East End United Methodist Church
Nashville, TN

Rev. Julie Wilson
Calvary United Methodist Church
Emmitsburg, MD

Mary Wilson
Servant Minister
Socastee United Methodist Church
Myrtle Beach, SC

James Winkler
President
National Council of Churches
Alexandria, VA

Peter Wohl
Senior Priest and Teacher
Soto Zen Buddhist
Treetop Zen Center
Unity, ME

Rev. Walter Woitasek
State Street United Church of Christ
Portland, ME

Rev. Airin Wolf
Unity Center for Spiritual Growth
Standish, ME

Rev. Jonathan Wright-Gray
Hope-Gateway United Methodist Church
Ocean Park, ME

Rev. Becky Yates
Dodson Chapel United Methodist Church
Hermitage, TN

Sandy Yee
CFO Hawai‘i Peace and Justice San Yee
Honolulu Friends Meeting
Honolulu, HI

Rev. Katey Zeh
Pullen Memorial Baptist Church
Apex, NC

Rabbi Lina Zerbarini
Kehillath Shalom Synagogue
Huntington Station, NY

Pastor Paul Ziese
First Lutheran Church
San Antonio, TX