

**SUPPORT PERMANENCY FOR FOSTER CHILDREN AND END
DISCRIMINATION**

Co-Sponsor H.R. 3827 - The Every Child Deserves a Family Act 2009

Current Cosponsors: Grijalva, Linda Sánchez, Fattah, Alcee Hastings, John Lewis, Wexler, Jesse Jackson Jr., Schakowsky, Rothman, Gwen Moore, Gutierrez, Berkley

Dear Colleague,

At any given moment there are around 500,000 children in the child welfare system. Over 125,000 of these abused and neglected children are waiting to be adopted. With only 50,000 adoptions each year, there is a clear shortage of adoptive parents. The result is that children, especially minority and special needs children, languish in care and bounce from placement to placement. The severe developmental, emotional, and educational costs to children raised in foster care are well documented. The 25,000 youth who never find a permanent family and “age out” of the system each year are more likely than nearly any other group to become homeless, incarcerated, or suffer with mental illness or substance abuse.

Despite the need for more adoptive and permanent foster homes, some states have enacted discriminatory bans that prohibit children from being placed with qualified parents due to the parent’s sexual orientation or marital status. The result is less children being adopted and more children bouncing around the foster care system with no permanency and no security. In some cases these bans have resulted in a grandparent having to go through costly litigation in order to care for their own kin who are in foster care. When placing a child with an adoptive or foster parent, the only criteria should be what is in the child’s best interest and whether the prospective parent(s) can provide a safe and nurturing home. Nearly all mainstream children’s groups, including the Child Welfare League of America, the American Bar Association, and the American Psychological Association support adoption by qualified unmarried and same gender couples.

In order to open up more homes for abused and neglected children, I am introducing the Every Child Deserves a Family Act. This bill would simply prohibit any entity that receives Federal adoption or child welfare funding from denying or delaying adoptions or foster care placements based solely on the prospective parents marital status or sexual orientation.

We should do everything in our power to ensure that abused and neglected children achieve permanency. Discriminatory bans do nothing but further harm children who only want a safe home and a loving family. If you wish to cosponsor this legislation or you want to learn more, please contact Jeff Hild at 55065 or jeff.hild@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Pete Stark