

June 29, 2018

The Honorable Henry McMaster  
State House  
1100 Gervais Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor McMaster:

We, the undersigned faith leaders and organizations, write with great concern about a provision of the budget bill (H. 4950) that deals with faith-based child-placing agencies. We write to ask that you veto paragraph 38.29 in the bill when it is on your desk.

If enacted, this provision would permit child welfare agencies that receive taxpayer dollars and participate in government-supported child welfare services to discriminate against children and prospective parents. As such, the bill would allow these agencies to ignore the best interests of the children they agree to serve. We oppose the use of taxpayer dollars to subsidize discrimination and reject the idea that government-funded child welfare agencies should enjoy a blanket exemption from professional standards and practices that emphasize that every placement must, first and foremost, be made with the best interest of the child in mind.

Permitting taxpayer dollars to subsidize discriminatory practices such as this will hurt children in need of loving and supportive homes and vital services. There are almost 4,000 children in the South Carolina foster care system, approximately 1,300 of whom are eligible for adoption. In 2015, almost 200 South Carolina youth “aged out” of the foster care system, leaving them at a higher risk for poverty, homelessness, incarceration, and early parenthood than youth adopted while in foster care. This bill will make it harder for the children of the South Carolina foster care system to find their forever home.

As people of faith and faith-based organizations, we celebrate the important work of so many faith-based child welfare agencies that support foster youth. 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, and a misunderstanding of civil rights law.

We are partners in the sacred work of those faith-based child welfare agencies seeking to serve children in care and unite them with forever families and share their calling to build a world of wholeness and compassion. Further, our values as Americans and as people of faith compel us to ensure that every child finds their forever home, and that every family that can provide a safe, supportive, and loving home for a child is matched with the child that will make their family whole.

Again, we urge you to veto this discriminatory measure. Please do not allow the harms in this provision to become law.

Sincerely,

**South Carolina Faith Leaders,\* Congregations, and Organizations**

Rabbi Stephanie Alexander, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, Charleston  
Rev. Frank W. Anderson, Lutheran Campus Ministry USC, Columbia  
Karen L. Ayers, Lay Servant, United Methodist, St. George  
Claudia Smith Brinson, Lay Leader & Board Member, South Carolina Dharma Group, Columbia  
Rev. Timothy L. Bupp, Reformation Lutheran Church, Columbia  
Rabbi Jonathan Case, Beth Shalom Synagogue, Columbia  
Patricia Clancy, Worship Chair, First United Methodist Church, Lancaster  
Rev. Dr. Karin Bascom Culp, United Methodist, Columbia  
Rev. Dr. Nancy N. Elsenheimer, Garden of Grace United Church of Christ, Columbia  
Holli Emore, Founder and Priestess, Temple Osireion, Columbia  
Rev. Bud Esper, Non-denominational, Longs  
Rev. Adrienne Fink, United Methodist, Cayce  
Rev. Michael P. Flanagan, Holy Cross Episcopal Church, Simpsonville  
Rev. Dr. Samuel B. George, III, United Methodist, Myrtle Beach  
Rev. Michael E. Goldston, United Methodist, Greenville  
Sue Owen Gover, Stephen Minister, First United Methodist Church, Clover  
Rev. Megan Gray, Cokesbury United Methodist Church, North Charleston  
Rev. Dr. J. Christopher Greene, Shiloh United Methodist Church, Gilbert  
Rev. Wendy Hudson-Jacoby, Two Rivers Church — A United Methodist Community, Charleston  
Rabbi Greg Kanter, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, Charleston  
Dr. Nancy Kreml, Lay Leader & Board Member, South Carolina Dharma Group, Columbia  
Rev. Mitch Kyllonen, United Methodist, Spartanburg  
Rabbi Yossi J. Liebowitz, B'nai Israel, Spartanburg  
Rev. Dr. Charles H. Lippy, United Methodist, Charleston  
Rev. Evelyn Middleton, United Methodist, Chapin  
Rabbi Eric Mollo, Tree of Life Congregation, Columbia  
Rev. Dr. Steven D. Morgan, United Methodist, Easley  
Rev. Elizabeth Murray, United Methodist, Lexington  
Rev. Kenneth Nelson, United Methodist, Columbia  
Rev. Richard Reams, North Charleston United Methodist Church, North Charleston  
Rev. Danny Reed, The Unitarian Church in Charleston, Charleston  
Rev. Dr. Jeremy Rutledge, Circular Congregational Church, Charleston  
Rev. Robert David Smith, Metropolitan Community Church of Charleston, North Charleston  
Rev. Thomas A. Summers, United Methodist, Columbia  
Rev. Emily Scales Sutton, Bethel United Methodist Church, Rock Hill

Rt. Rev. W. Andrew Waldo, Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina, Columbia  
Rev. Toni L. White, United Methodist, Lexington  
Rev. Carly Wicklund, United Methodist, Columbia  
Rev. Dr. Paul A. Wood, Jr., United Methodist, Inman

*\*Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only*

Anti-Defamation League Southeast Regional Office  
Beth Shalom Synagogue, Columbia  
Circular Congregational Church, Charleston  
Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina  
Garden of Grace United Church of Christ, Columbia  
Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, Charleston  
Lutheran Campus Ministry USC, Columbia  
Metropolitan Community Church of Charleston, North Charleston  
North Charleston United Methodist Church, North Charleston  
Reconciling Ministries Network, South Carolina  
Reformation Lutheran Church, Columbia  
Shiloh United Methodist Church, Gilbert  
Temple Osireion, Columbia  
Two Rivers Church — A United Methodist Community, Charleston

### **National Religious and Faith-based Organizations**

African American Ministers In Action-Equal Justice Task Force  
Ameinu  
As the Spirit Moves Us  
Avodah  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action  
Catholics for Choice  
Columbia Theological Seminary  
DignityUSA  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance  
Equal Partners in Faith  
EthicsDaily.com  
Faith in Public Life  
Faith Matters Network  
The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries  
Global Faith & Justice Project  
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches  
Institute for Welcoming Resources  
Integrity USA - The Episcopal Rainbow  
Intersections International  
Interfaith Alliance

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action  
Jewish Community Action  
Keshet  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
Metropolitan Community Churches  
Muslims for Progressive Values  
National Coalition of American Nuns  
National Council of Jewish Women  
New Ways Ministry  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Religious Institute  
SOJOURN  
Tivnu: Building Justice  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
Uri L'Tzedek: Orthodox Social Justice  
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)  
The Workmen's Circle  
YATOM: The Jewish Foster & Adoption Network