

THE DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer
Arizona Governor
Executive Tower
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

February 24, 2014

RE: SB1062

Dear Governor Brewer:

The Donaldson Adoption Institute is an independent, nonpartisan and not-for-profit research, policy and education organization. We conduct research and analysis in order to improve adoption-related laws, policies and practices. This letter regarding SB1062 is intended to explain the state of professional knowledge on one of those issues: the critical need for the largest possible pool of qualified parents to adopt girls and boys languishing in the child welfare system, and the harm to children that results from excluding any single qualified class of parents (such as gay and lesbian couples) from that pool. The Institute has conducted the most extensive studies to date on this issue. The reports are on our website, www.adoptioninstitute.org, or go to them via this link: [Expanding Resources for Children I, II, and III](#).

We believe that signing SB1062 – which would permit child-placement agencies in Arizona to exclude some qualified prospective adoptive or foster parents because of religious tenets – would hurt some children who need families. In Arizona, there are approximately 2,774 foster youth waiting for adoptive families, for an average of over 2½ years. Multiple studies find these children, most of whom are older and have special developmental challenges, are at considerable risk of serious negative outcomes if they are not adopted. These risks include poverty, homelessness, incarceration, victimization, early parenthood, and significant physical and mental health problems. To succeed, they need parents who can provide them with nurture and support, not just during childhood, but into young adulthood.

Even though adoptions from foster care have grown over the past decade, the number of youth exiting care without families remains too high – 700 youth in Arizona “graduate” each year from foster care. Of children waiting to be adopted in Arizona, about 30 percent are 9 years or older; for these youth, the likelihood of being adopted drops significantly.

Lesbian and gay parents are important family resources for waiting children throughout our country. Several studies have documented that lesbian and gay adults are willing to adopt the very children most in need of homes – those who are older and have special needs – and do so at a higher rate than do heterosexual adults. Among same-sex couples raising children, 19 percent have adopted (which is a much higher percentage than is true of the general population); according to the U.S. census, 2.5 percent of all children are adopted. Gay and lesbian adults provide a significant number of families for children who need foster or adoptive homes – over 14,000 children are estimated to live in lesbian- or gay-led foster families today, while at least 65,000 adopted children are being raised by such parents.

Major professional groups, including the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association, as well as child welfare organizations, overwhelmingly support adoptions by qualified gay and lesbian parents. The support of these professional organizations is not surprising. A quarter century of research has found that children raised by gay and lesbian parents fare well – on par with those reared by heterosexual parents.

Anytime we allow agencies that serve children in the child welfare system to discriminate against these families undermines the prospects of some boys and girls for finding permanent, loving families. Including gays and lesbians as adoptive parents for these children also would save the state substantial funds annually, resulting from moving children from foster care to adoption. Applicants should be judged on their qualifications, not their sexual orientation.

Too often, public policy relating to adoption has been based on aberrational anecdotes, emotional appeals and corrosive myths. Instead, please examine the research. I believe that, after you do, you will come to the same conclusion: To exclude qualified and eager prospective foster and adoptive parents is to place the wishes/beliefs of some individuals over the desperate need for homes for children. The Donaldson Adoption Institute strongly urges you not to sign this legislation.

Please feel free to contact me at [\(617\) 332-8944](tel:6173328944) or apertman@adoptioninstitute.org if you have questions or need more information. Thank you for your attention and for your important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Pertman', written in a cursive style.

Adam Pertman, President
Donaldson Adoption Institute