



The Office of Congressman John Lewis

THE EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY ACT OF 2013

In tribute to National Foster Care Awareness Month, Congressman John Lewis (D-GA) introduced the Every Child Deserves a Family Act of 2013 with Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY).

EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY (ECDF) ACT OVERVIEW

The ECDF Act ends the practice of discrimination against both foster care youth and potential foster care and adoptive parents.

This bill would prohibit any entity that receives federal child welfare funds from discriminating against prospective adoptive or foster parents on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identification, or marital status or on the basis of the sexual orientation or gender identity of the child involved.

This legislation provides clear guidance to states, and promotes the best interests of the children in the foster care system by increasing their access to the safe, supportive, and permanent homes.

Increasing adoption rates, as well as establishing permanency and decreasing risk factors for youth in foster care can yield an annual cost savings of between \$3 and \$6 billion.

BACKGROUND

The Every Child Deserves a Family Act was previously sponsored by former Rep. Fournety “Pete” Stark (D-CA) in the 111th and 112th Congresses. It is supported by nearly 100 child welfare, civil rights, faith-based, and LGBT organizations.

There are an estimated 400,000 children in the U.S. foster care system, approximately 104,000 of which are available for adoption. In 2011, 26,000 youth “aged out” of the foster care system. Research shows that these youth are at a high risk for poverty, homelessness, incarceration, and early parenthood.

There are more than 2,000,000 LGBT people who would consider serving as foster or adoptive parents but face obstacles due to existing state laws, regulations, and policies prohibiting them from doing so. Unfortunately, the current patchwork of state laws does a disservice to these children by denying them access to permanent, safe, and loving homes. The Every Child Deserves a Family Act would help break down these barriers in public adoptions.