



*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). Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) is introducing the Senate companion legislation.**

### **EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY ACT OVERVIEW**

The Every Child Deserves a Family (ECDF) Act ends the practice of prejudice against both foster care youth and potential foster care and adoptive parents. 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.

This ECDF Act would simply 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 due to the sexual orientation or gender identity of child in foster care.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Every Child Deserves a Family Act would help break down barriers in public adoptions and is supported by nearly 100 child welfare, civil rights, faith-based, and LGBT organizations.

Previously introduced by former Rep. Fournety “Pete” Stark (D-CA) in the 111<sup>th</sup> and 112<sup>th</sup> Congresses, Congressman Lewis and Rep. Ros-Lehtinen continued his efforts by reintroducing the bill in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.

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

Across the country, more than 2,000,000 LGBT people would consider serving as foster or adoptive parents. Unfortunately, they face obstacles due to existing state laws, regulations, and policies, and the current patchwork of state laws denies foster care youth the access to permanent, safe, and loving homes.

The Every Child Deserves a Family Act fixes these problems – saving money and heartache and restoring hope and happiness in the process.

## Organizations Supporting the Every Child Deserves a Family Act

### **Adoption/Foster Care and Child Welfare Organizations**

- Adoption Connection
- The Adoption Exchange
- Adoption Resources of Wisconsin
- American Humane Association
- American Psychological Association
- Building Bridges
- Center for Family Connections
- Child and Family Services
- Child Welfare League of America
- City Families
- Colorado Coalition of Adoptive Families
- Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
- EMQ FamiliesFirst
- Family Builders
- Family Design Resources
- Family Youth Initiative
- Independent Adoption Center
- Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange, Inc. (MARE)
- National Adoption Center
- New York Council on Adoptable Children
- North American Council on Adoptable Children
- Northwest Adoption Exchange
- Northwest Resource Associates
- NYS Citizen's Coalition for Children
- Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center
- Three Rivers Adoption Council
- TLC Child & Family Services
- Voice for Adoption
- We Hear the Children, Inc.

### **Civil Rights Organizations**

- American Civil Liberties Union
- American Humanist Association
- Black Leadership Forum
- Hip Hop Caucus
- National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- National Council of Negro Women, Inc.
- National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
- People for the American Way
- Secular Coalition for America
- South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)

### **Faith-based Organizations**

- African American Ministers in Action Equal Justice Task Force
- California Faith for Equality
- Ecumenical Catholic Church
- Equally Blessed Coalition
- Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion

- Interfaith Alliance
- Metropolitan Community Church of New York
- National Coalition of American Nuns
- National Council of Jewish Women
- New Ways Ministry
- Reconciling Ministries Network
- Religious Action Center
- The Religious Institute
- Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA)
- United Church of Christ
- Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)

### **LGBT Advocacy Organizations**

- Advocates for Youth
- Atticus Circle
- Basic Rights Oregon
- Centerlink
- The Civil Rights Agenda
- COLAGE
- Equality Arizona
- Equality Federation
- Equality Maryland
- Equality North Carolina
- Fairness West Virginia
- Families Like Ours
- Family Equality Council
- Florida Together Federation
- Gay Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)
- Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
- Georgia Equality
- Global Justice Institute
- Human Rights Campaign
- Immigration Equality Action Fund
- Integrity USA
- Kentucky Fairness Alliance
- KhushDC
- Lambda Legal
- Log Cabin Republicans
- Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition
- MassEquality
- MEGA Family Project
- Mountain Meadow
- National Black Justice Coalition
- National Center for Lesbian Rights
- National Center for Transgender Equality
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
- National Stonewall Democrats
- Our Family Coalition
- OutFront Minnesota
- PFLAG National
- ProMo Missouri
- Stonewall Bar Association of Georgia, Inc.
- Transgender Law Center