TESTIMONY: HB 5763 and HB 5764

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I am grateful to the House Committee on Families, Children and Senior Citizens for providing an opportunity for the public to comment on HB 5763 and HB 5764. My frame of reference for commenting on this legislation is both a religious and a professional one. For over 30 years I have worked as a social worker that included a time when I placed children in foster homes. Currently, I serve as the Director of the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network, a statewide network of Unitarian Universalist activists. It is a matter of principle with the Unitarian Universalist denomination, which includes 26 UU congregations in Michigan, that all people, regardless of their race, income or gender identify, must be treated with respect and dignity. Our denomination believes that all loving families, including gay couples, should have the right to adopt a child.

Within this religious framework, it is quite troubling that the legislation being considered today would allow adoption agencies to legally DENY an adoption placement based on that agency's "moral or religious beliefs" even if denial of an adoptive home with a gay couple might be AGAINST the best interests of a child who needs a home with loving, responsible parents. We are concerned that such a law would legalize discrimination against gay couples, African American couples or single parents who have the capacity to provide a good, loving home for children who desperately need such stability. Furthermore, HB 5764 would protect government funding for agencies choosing to discriminate.

With 14,000 children in Michigan who need a place to call home, our government should be focusing on finding stable environments to raise children, not on turning away capable and willing families eager to love and support a child in need. My faith-based organization strongly opposes passage of HB 5763 and HB 5764.