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September 11, 2013

Honorable Kenneth Kurtz, Chair
House Families, Children, and Senior Committee
N-992 House Office Bldg.
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Representative Kurtz and Members of the House Families, Children, and Seniors Committee:

The Michigan National Organization for Women **opposes House Bills 4927 and 4928**. Combined, this proposed legislation would amend the Michigan Adoption Code (MCL 710.23b et al.) and Social Welfare Act (MCL 400.5a) to permit a religiously-affiliated child placing agency to carry out discriminatory adoption practices if these are written policies of the agency.

This would enshrine in state law and endorse discriminatory policies of some religiously-affiliated child placing agencies. Some religions continue to practice anti-homosexual, anti-women's rights, and anti-divorce policies, for instance, going so far as to bar participation of members of those groups in its leadership and policy decision-making.

We recommend that not only should these bills be defeated, but that any child placing agency which espouses biased and discriminatory policies based on religion, race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, and sexual orientation in its written policies or in the conduct of its child placement functions **have its license revoked**. Certainly **no state funding should go to such an agency**. Child placement agencies should have as their main purpose the **best interest of the children, not the best interest of their own religion.**

In short, these bills undo many of the civil rights gains of the past and the greater understanding and acceptance of diversity in our society. These bills promote and reward intolerance through state-sanctioned discrimination. We urge you to not report out these bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 4927 and 4928.

Sincerely,

Mary Pollock
Legislative Vice President

NOW's purpose is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.