



29 June 2011

The Honorable Pete Stark
United States House of Representatives
239 Cannon Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the Every Child Deserves a Family Act (H. R. 1681)

Dear Congressman Stark:

On behalf of The Trevor Project's board of directors, staff, volunteers and the tens of thousands of youth we serve each year, **we applaud and offer our support for the Every Child Deserves a Family Act (H. R. 1681)**. As the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, we applaud the discrimination protections and changes outlined in the bill—as they seek to reduce the number of children overall in the foster care and adoption systems and allow those systems to better meet the needs of all Americans, including LGBTQ parents and children.

Every day we talk with young people across the United States who are struggling within the foster care and adoption systems, and tragically many of them are considering ending their lives. Further our experience has shown, and the research confirmed, that LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented in the foster care system. One of the various reasons that LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented in the foster care system is that they are forced to leave families that do not accept their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Sadly, once they enter the system they continue to face discrimination from publicly-funded agencies that refuse to place LGBTQ youth citing falsely that it is too difficult or not their responsibility. We both recognize that this is an unacceptable reality of discrimination.

From a fiscal standpoint, opening up more homes to LGBTQ parents will reduce the costs through fewer youth requiring public funds for their care in between families. Further, promoting happy, healthy families is crucial to one's personal development and will likely result in fewer young people entering the justice system or needing public assistance in later stages in life. While an ethically important bill, there are also enormous cost savings afforded through the proposed legislation.

This bill is a crucial step towards ending the preventable tragedy of suicide among young people by working to ensure youth have better access to loving families and the support they need for a health adolescent development. If you have additional questions on our support for the bill, please contact our Sr. Public Policy and Research Manager Dave Reynolds at (310) 271 – 8845 ext. 258 or Dave.Reynolds@TheTrevorProject.org.

Sincerely,

David McFarland
Interim Executive Director & CEO

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Sr. Public Policy and Research Manager

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