



**CHRISTIAN ADOPTION
SERVICES**
EST. 1985

**Testimony of Jean Nasers
Interim Director of Christian Adoption Services**

Before the North Dakota Senate Committee on Human Services on HB 1534

**IN OPPOSITION
February 23, 2023**

Thank you, Ms. Chairperson, and members of the Committee for providing the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition of House Bill 1534. I am the interim director for Christian Adoption Services, a Licensed Child Placing Agency that has been in operation since 1985.

As adoption case workers, we take our work and the home study evaluation process very seriously because we are entrusted with the lives of children. Our work is life changing for everyone involved, but for the children it impacts every single part of their lives. Their past, present, and future will forever be changed by their adoption. Children cannot choose their parents and we are entrusted with their health, safety, and wellbeing when we evaluate families through the home study process.

The home study process is much more than just going through a series of steps and completion of paperwork. Each family is unique and has distinctive events, characteristics, histories, and traits that need to be discussed or approached differently throughout the home study process. The adoption process, in general, is very taxing and requires a good deal of emotional regulation and overall stability. The home study is the calmest part of the whole process because it is based on many things that are in the adoptive family's control. After the home study, everything is very uncertain: the waiting, being presented to expectant parents, being chosen, and matched with an expectant parent, having a match fall through, navigating a relationship with a birth family, and then transitioning from not having a child one day to suddenly having one the next. It is a roller coaster and filled with new things many of us have never had to even consider being prepared for.

This all being said, it is crucial that you understand that assessing a family for foster care versus adoption is very different. Families are trained, educated, and evaluated with different end goals in mind. The goal of foster care is always reunification. The goal of adoption is always permanency. The training and education surrounding foster care focuses on crisis intervention, short term stability, and therapeutic parenting. The training and education for adoption focuses on helping parents know how to support their adopted child throughout their life and how to have a long term, loving relationship with their child's birth family. The other unique piece that is not typically addressed or discussed in the foster care home study process is the impact a family has experienced from infertility. Infertility has left a mark on the hearts of many looking to grow their family through adoption. These families have a different level of grief that they must process before entering into adoption. Failure to address the impact infertility has had on a family before they are approved for adoption can have life long negative effects on them and, more importantly, their adoptive children.

At this time, I recommend an amendment to the current proposal that states: a Licensed Child Placing Agency may approve an existing foster care home study for adoption after the family has completed the additional required training, education, paperwork, meetings, and evaluations required by the LCPA. These studies are in place to protect the children that are entrusted to our care. With that in mind, please protect our children and do not support House Bill 1534 as it is currently written. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Sincerely,

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