



*Representing the Diocese of Fargo
and the Diocese of Bismarck*

103 South Third Street
Suite 10
Bismarck ND 58501
701-223-2519
ndcatholic.org
ndcatholic@ndcatholic.org

To: House Human Services Committee
From: David Tamisiea, Executive Director
Date: January 27, 2025
Re: HB 1556 — Relinquishment of Adoptive Parental Rights

The North Dakota Catholic Conference opposes House Bill 1556 which would establish a legal framework for the relinquishment of parental rights of adoptive parents.

When a parent adopts a child, the adoption establishes a parent/child bond that is no different from a biological parent/child relationship - a parent is a parent.¹ Birth parents who have children with the same behavioral problems as those listed in this bill do not have the option to terminate their parental relationship, and neither should adoptive parents. If any parent were to experience serious problems with a child, adopted or not, the answer would be for the parent to get professional help for the child, not to terminate the parental/child relationship.

Adoption is meant to create a forever family for the adoptive child. If HB 1556 were to become law, it would set a terrible precedent for adoptions by allowing adoptive parents to reverse the adoption during difficult times. Many children placed for adoption suffer from trauma, but much of their healing comes from having a lasting family relationship that endures through the ups and downs of life. Allowing adoptive parents to relinquish parental rights would be detrimental to all adopted children, leaving them feeling insecure and uncertain as to whether or not their parents will keep them or not.

While we certainly feel great empathy for adoptive families experiencing difficult situations, HB 1556 would effectively treat an adoptive child as a commodity or product in the marketplace that did not work out and could be returned. This contradicts the immeasurable dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27). The Catholic Church teaches that “parents must regard their children as children of God and respect them as human persons” (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2222).

We respectfully ask for a **Do Not Pass** recommendation on House Bill 1556.

¹ “A final decree of adoption ... [has] the following effect: To create the relationship of parent and child between petitioner and the adopted individual, as if the adopted individual were a legitimate blood descendent of the petitioner, for all purposes.” North Dakota Revised Uniform Adoption Code, NDCC § 14-15-14(1)(b).