

Act No. 53
Public Acts of 2015
Approved by the Governor
June 11, 2015
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STATE OF MICHIGAN
98TH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2015

Introduced by Reps. LaFontaine, Crawford, McBroom, Cole, Runestad, Webber, Aaron Miller, Glenn, Jenkins, Cox, Poleski, Franz, Rendon, Price, Goike, Lauwers, Gardon, Jacobsen and Potvin

ENROLLED HOUSE BILL No. 4188

AN ACT to amend 1973 PA 116, entitled "An act to provide for the protection of children through the licensing and regulation of child care organizations; to provide for the establishment of standards of care for child care organizations; to prescribe powers and duties of certain departments of this state and adoption facilitators; to provide penalties; and to repeal acts and parts of acts," (MCL 722.111 to 722.128) by adding sections 14e and 14f.

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

Sec. 14e. (1) The legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) When it is necessary for a child in this state to be placed with an adoptive or foster family, placing the child in a safe, loving, and supportive home is a paramount goal of this state.

(b) As of the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section, there are 105 licensed adoption and foster care agencies in this state that are authorized to participate in and assist families with adoption and foster parent placements of children.

(c) Having as many possible qualified adoption and foster parent agencies in this state is a substantial benefit to the children of this state who are in need of these placement services and to all of the citizens of this state because the more qualified agencies taking part in this process, the greater the likelihood that permanent child placement can be achieved.

(d) As of the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section, the adoption and foster care licensees of this state represent a broad spectrum of organizations and groups, some of which are faith based and some of which are not faith based.

(e) Private child placing agencies, including faith-based child placing agencies, have the right to free exercise of religion under both the state and federal constitutions. Under well-settled principles of constitutional law, this right includes the freedom to abstain from conduct that conflicts with an agency's sincerely held religious beliefs.

(f) Faith-based and non-faith-based child placing agencies have a long and distinguished history of providing adoption and foster care services in this state.

(g) Children and families benefit greatly from the adoption and foster care services provided by faith-based and non-faith-based child placing agencies. Ensuring that faith-based child placing agencies can continue to provide adoption and foster care services will benefit the children and families who receive publicly funded services.

(h) Under well-established department contracting practices, a private child placing agency does not receive public funding with respect to a particular child or particular individuals referred by the department unless that agency affirmatively accepts the referral.

(i) Under well-settled principles of constitutional law distinguishing “private action” from “state action”, a private child placing agency does not engage in state action when the agency performs private-adoption or direct-placement services. Similarly, a private child placing agency does not engage in state action relative to a referral for services under a contract with the department before the agency accepts the referral.

(2) To the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law, a child placing agency shall not be required to provide any services if those services conflict with, or provide any services under circumstances that conflict with, the child placing agency’s sincerely held religious beliefs contained in a written policy, statement of faith, or other document adhered to by the child placing agency.

(3) To the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law, the state or a local unit of government shall not take an adverse action against a child placing agency on the basis that the child placing agency has declined or will decline to provide any services that conflict with, or provide any services under circumstances that conflict with, the child placing agency’s sincerely held religious beliefs contained in a written policy, statement of faith, or other document adhered to by the child placing agency.

(4) If a child placing agency declines to provide any services under subsection (2), the child placing agency shall provide in writing information advising the applicant of the department’s website, the Michigan adoption resource exchange or similar subsequently utilized websites, and a list of adoption or foster care service providers with contact information and shall do at least 1 of the following:

(a) Promptly refer the applicant to another child placing agency that is willing and able to provide the declined services.

(b) Promptly refer the applicant to the webpage on the department’s website that identifies other licensed child placement agencies.

(5) A child placing agency may assert a defense in an administrative or judicial proceeding based on this section.

(6) If a child placing agency declines to provide any services under subsection (2), the child placing agency’s decision does not limit the ability of another child placing agency to provide those services.

(7) For the purpose of this section:

(a) “Adverse action” includes, but is not limited to, denying a child placing agency’s application for funding, refusing to renew the child placing agency’s funding, canceling the child placing agency’s funding, declining to enter into a contract with the child placing agency, refusing to renew a contract with the child placing agency, canceling a contract with the child placing agency, declining to issue a license to the child placing agency, refusing to renew the child placing agency’s license, canceling the child placing agency’s license, taking an enforcement action against a child placing agency, discriminating against the child placing agency in regard to participation in a government program, and taking any action that materially alters the terms or conditions of the child placing agency’s funding, contract, or license.

(b) “Services” includes any service that a child placing agency provides, except foster care case management and adoption services provided under a contract with the department.

Sec. 14f. (1) If the department makes a referral to a child placing agency for foster care case management or adoption services under a contract with the child placing agency, the child placing agency may decide not to accept the referral if the services would conflict with the child placing agency’s sincerely held religious beliefs contained in a written policy, statement of faith, or other document adhered to by the child placing agency. Before accepting a referral for services under a contract with the department, the child placing agency has the sole discretion to decide whether to engage in activities and perform services related to that referral. The department shall not control the child placing agency’s decision whether to engage in those activities or perform those services. For purposes of this subsection, a child placing agency accepts a referral by doing either of the following:

(a) Submitting to the department a written agreement to perform the services related to the particular child or particular individuals that the department referred to the child placing agency.

(b) Engaging in any other activity that results in the department being obligated to pay the child placing agency for the services related to the particular child or particular individuals that the department referred to the child placing agency.

(2) The state or a local unit of government shall not take an adverse action against a child placing agency on the basis that the child placing agency has decided to accept or not accept a referral under subsection (1).

(3) If a child placing agency decides not to accept a referral under subsection (1), that occurrence shall not be a factor in determining whether a placement in connection with the referral is in the best interest of the child.

(4) A child placing agency may assert a defense in an administrative or judicial proceeding based on this section.

(5) For the purpose of this section, “adverse action” includes, but is not limited to, denying a child placing agency’s application for funding, refusing to renew the child placing agency’s funding, canceling the child placing agency’s funding, declining to enter into a contract with the child placing agency, refusing to renew a contract with the child placing agency, canceling a contract with the child placing agency, declining to issue a license to the child placing agency,

refusing to renew the child placing agency's license, canceling the child placing agency's license, taking an enforcement action against a child placing agency, discriminating against the child placing agency in regard to participation in a government program, and taking any action that materially alters the terms or conditions of the child placing agency's funding, contract, or license.

Enacting section 1. It is the intent of the legislature to protect child placing agencies' free exercise of religion protected by the United States constitution and the state constitution of 1963. This amendatory act is not intended to limit or deny any person's right to adopt a child or participate in foster care.

Enacting section 2. This amendatory act takes effect 90 days after the date it is enacted into law.

Enacting section 3. This amendatory act does not take effect unless all of the following bills of the 98th Legislature are enacted into law:

- (a) House Bill No. 4189.
- (b) House Bill No. 4190.

This act is ordered to take immediate effect.



Clerk of the House of Representatives



Secretary of the Senate

Approved

Governor

Compiler's note: House Bill No. 4189, referred to in enacting section 3, was filed with the Secretary of State June 11, 2015, and became 2015 PA 54, Eff. Sept. 9, 2015.

House Bill No. 4190, also referred to in enacting section 3, was filed with the Secretary of State June 11, 2015, and became 2015 PA 55, Eff. Sept. 9, 2015.