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Michigan lawsuit could imperil religious adoption agencies



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Lansing, Mich., Sep 24, 2017 / 03:02 am (CNA/EWTN News).- Faith-based adoption agencies won't be able to adhere to their religious mission in Michigan if a lawsuit challenging state law succeeds, critics say.

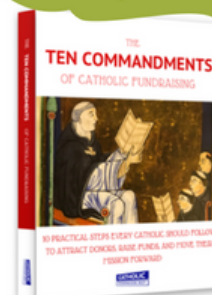
"This suit challenging Michigan's law is mean-spirited, divisive and intolerant," the Michigan Catholic Conference said Sept. 20.

"It is counter-productive toward efforts to assist vulnerable persons and to promote a variety of opportunities for differing families. It is imperative for the state law to be defended from yet another egregious attack on religious faith in public life."

The conference defended the law as necessary "to promote diversity in child placement and to maintain a private/public partnership that would stabilize the adoption and foster care space for years to come."

The federal lawsuit, filed Wednesday, is backed by the American Civil Liberties Union. It charges that the state law allows groups to use a religious test in carrying out public services like foster child or adoption placement. It contends this is unconstitutional and violates both the

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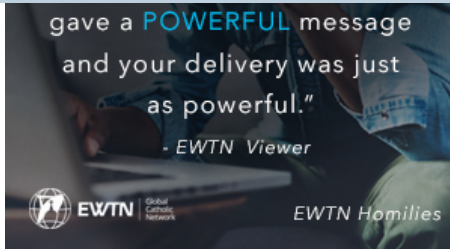
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The 2015 law, which was passed with the backing of the Michigan Catholic Conference, prevents state-funded adoption and foster agencies from being forced to place children in violation of their

beliefs. The law protects them from civil action and from threats to their public funding. When the law was passed, about 25 percent of Michigan's adoption and foster agencies were faith-based.

These agencies have worked in the state for decades and have helped place thousands of vulnerable children, the Michigan Catholic Conference said.

David M. Maluchnik, a spokesperson for the Michigan Catholic conference, told the Wall Street Journal that the law aimed to protect "the right of these agencies to operate in accordance with their religious mission."

"We play a primary role in providing homes for loving families looking to adopt or foster a child," he said.

The law requires agencies that decline to place children with same-sex couples to refer the couples to other providers.

ACLU attorney Jay Kaplan contended that the law allows agencies to discriminate and puts a child in a situation between "finding a permanent loving home or staying in the system."



Kristy Dumont, one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said she and her civilly recognized spouse Dana Dumont had wanted to adopt in Ingham County but were turned down by Catholic Charities and Bethany Christian Services.

Maluchnik said that there are many Michigan agencies that would place a child with the couple. He questioned why the plaintiffs sued rather than go to another agency.

Before the law was passed, Bethany Christian Services warned that future policies could force faith-based agencies to "choose between their desire to help children and families and their fidelity to their religious principles," the Michigan-based MLive Media Group reported in 2015.

Tags: [Adoption](#), [Catholic News](#)

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