

Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/20/texas-law-invites-discrimination-child-welfare-services>

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Law Fails to Prioritize Children's Rights

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Texas governor signed into law a [controversial bill](#) that ensures child welfare agencies that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, or religion will still receive government support.

Under the new law, signed on June 15, state institutions can't withhold funding, licenses, or contracts from any of the agencies that place children in foster or adoptive homes if the agencies refuse to provide services or make referrals that conflict with their sincerely held religious beliefs. The law additionally shields service providers that refuse to help youth find contraception or abortion services.

The bill was roundly criticized by LGBT advocates and children's rights advocates, both because it invites discrimination against qualified prospective parents and because it jeopardizes the best interests of children who would benefit from a stable, loving home.

The new law will protect adoption and foster care agencies that reject same-sex couples if the agency believes marriage should only be between a man and a woman. It will also protect state funding for agencies that provide counseling or educational services in line with agencies' religious beliefs something advocates worry could lead to conversion therapy for LGBT kids.

Beyond the LGBT context, the law opens the door for agencies to discriminate on other grounds for example, to reject prospective parents based on their faith or marital status or to require Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, or atheist children in their care to submit to Christian instruction.

This law is even more stringent than similar laws passed in [South Dakota](#) and [Alabama](#) in 2017. Not only does it license discrimination in adoption and foster care services, but it also applies to Texas family preservation and support services, counseling for youth, and programs to assist abused and neglected children.

This isn't the only way LGBT people are being discriminated against in Texas. A special legislative session, starting on July 18, will have restrictions on transgender students access to bathrooms and locker rooms on the agenda [something our research shows](#) jeopardize the safety, health, and well-being of young people.

Instead of doubling down on discrimination, Governor Abbott and the legislature should put children first, and work to ensure that all youth in Texas have loving homes and safe schools.

Violence and the Human Rights of Transgender People in the United States

The Human Rights Consequences of Parental Notice of Abortion in Illinois

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