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ARTICLE

Important Victory: Foster Parents No Longer Have To Adhere To LGBT Ideology



BY RYAN FOLEY/THE WASHINGTON STAND FEBRUARY 26, 2026

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Vermont has adopted new guidance eliminating a requirement that foster parents embrace LGBT ideology and has restored the licenses of foster parents who had theirs revoked over their religious beliefs, bringing an end to several lawsuits.

In a statement on Monday, the conservative nonprofit legal organization Alliance Defending Freedom announced that a settlement has been reached in litigation against the state of Vermont over a requirement that prospective foster parents must speak in contrast to their beliefs on gender and sexuality to be licensed.

Vermont has adopted new guidance stressing that "[a]pplicants' sincerely held personal, cultural, religious, moral, or philosophical beliefs shall not be considered in the licensing process."

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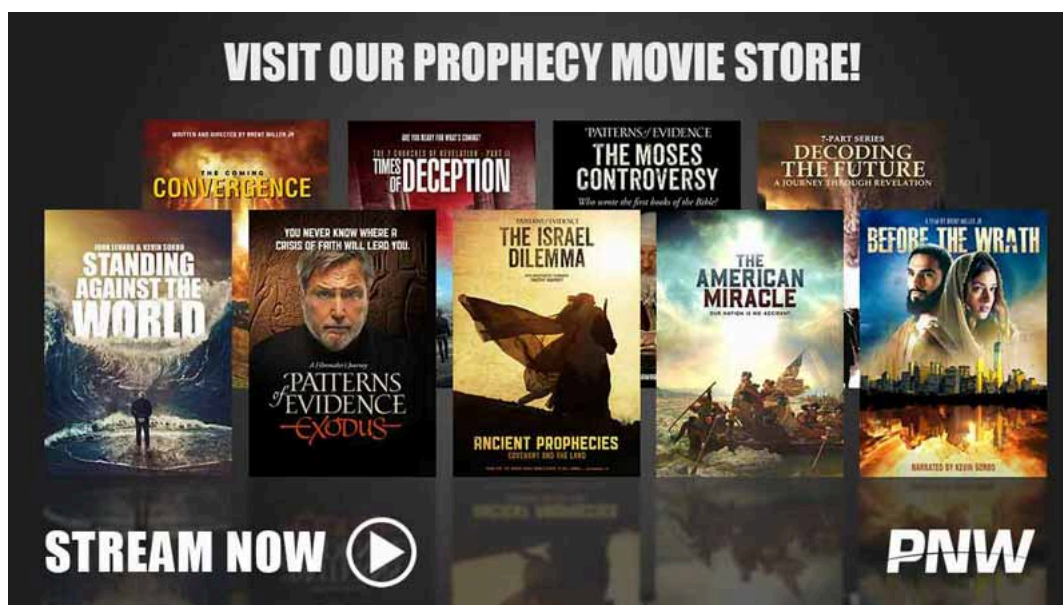
"Applicants shall not be excluded based on any such beliefs nor on an intent to live, parent, and make day-to-day caregiving decisions consistent with those beliefs, so long as required standards of safety, care, non-discrimination, and respect for a child's safety, well-being, and dignity are met," the guidance added.

Under the new guidance, expressing limitations around caring for "children and youth with diverse identities," including LGBT identity, will not be considered "inherently discriminatory." It also states, "These are normal considerations that belong in matching, not licensing."

The Vermont Department of Children and Families will not force foster parents to offer an "endorsement or affirmation of specific identities," embrace the "use of particular vocabulary, prescribed language, or preferred pronouns related to gender identity, sexual



er expression" or agree to "facilitate medical appointments or procedures related to gender-affirming care" as a  
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ng the license necessary to serve as foster parents in the state.



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ADF represented two sets of devout Christian families at the center of the litigation: Brian and Kaity Wuoti and Michael and Rebecca Gantt, who uphold traditional Christian beliefs on marriage and sexuality. Both couples had their licenses to serve as foster parents revoked under the previous guidance, which required foster parents to be "holistically affirming and supporting" of a child's sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

"We're thankful that common sense won out and that Vermont has changed its policy to put children's interests above divisive ideologies," the Wuotis said in a statement reacting to the development. "We're grateful for one more opportunity to help give children a safe and loving home."

The Gantts also praised the new guidance. "There are more kids in the foster-care system than there are families to care for them," the couple asserted. "Our focus throughout this case has been on the children who need stability and love above everything else. We're overjoyed that Vermont is doing right by the children in the system."

ADF Senior Counsel Johannes Widmalm-Delphonse called the new developments "an incredible victory for children in Vermont's foster-care system."

"No parent should be forced to lie to a vulnerable child about who they are, much less promote irreversible and life-altering procedures that don't have any proven health benefits," Widmalm-Delphonse said. "And, unfortunately, other loving families have been unable to open their homes to children in need just because of their Christian worldview."

Another Christian couple whose license to serve as foster parents was previously revoked will also benefit from the new guidance. The Center for American Liberty announced in a statement Monday that Melinda Antonucci and Casey Mathieu had their license restored after being revoked due to their beliefs on sexuality.

"We became foster parents because we love children and wanted to help kids in need," commented Antonucci. "The state tried to disqualify us because of our protected beliefs and because we wouldn't say what the government wanted us to say. This settlement means our



family serving foster youth, and it helps ensure other foster parents won't be punished for speaking honestly or living out  
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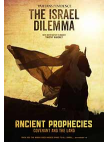
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