

JOHN LEWIS EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY ACT

What is the John Lewis Every Child Deserves a Family Act (ECDF)?

- **It is a federal bill that promotes the best interests of children by increasing the number of foster and adoptive homes available to all children in foster care and improving services to LGBTQ+ and religious minority children.** ECDF does so by prohibiting federally funded child welfare service providers from discriminating against children, families, and individuals based on religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and marital status.
- **The Act bans conversion therapy for children receiving or participating in federally funded child welfare programs or services.** It promotes the well-being, safety and permanency of and culturally competent care for the 1 in 3 children in foster care who identify as LGBTQ+ who suffer greater rates of mistreatment and worse outcomes than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. It does so by increasing access to best practices, resources and technical assistance to states, tribes, and service providers, and by requiring data collection on LGBTQ+ youth and parents.
- **The Act requires federally funded foster care services and staff training to be affirming of the complex social identities of children in foster care,** including their race, color, national origin, ability, religion, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, as currently required for runaway and homeless youth.

Why is the John Lewis Every Child Deserves a Family Act Necessary?

- **Permanency for At-Risk Youth:** There are more than 391,000 children in our foster care system, with over 113,000 waiting for a permanent family. More than 19,000 youth “age out” of care each year without finding a permanent home and with limited support and resources.
- **Culturally Competent Care:** The American Association of Pediatrics warns that policies singling out or discrimination against LGBTQ+ youth “are harmful to social-emotional health and may have lifelong consequences.” The Center for the Study of Social Policies has found that LGBTQ children “are disproportionately involved with child welfare and experience worse outcomes than their peers *due to trauma they often experience while in state care.*”

Who Supports the John Lewis Every Child Deserves a Family Act?

- Over 200 Major Child Welfare, Health, Faith, and Civil Rights Organizations, and over 700 Faith Leaders Support the Act. See <https://fmeq.co/endorsers>.

To cosponsor in the Senate contact Anna.Song@gillibrand.senate.gov in Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand’s office.

To cosponsor in the House contact Jill.Hunter-Williams@mail.house.gov in Rep. Danny Davis’ office or Gabriella.Boffelli@mail.house.gov in Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón’s office.

For more information visit <https://fmeq.co/about>
or email Laura Brennan, Policy Associate, Child Welfare at Family Equality at lbrennan@familyequality.org