May 10, 2018

The Honorable Mary Fallin  
Oklahoma State Capitol  
2300 N. Lincoln Boulevard  
Room 212  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Governor Fallin:

We, the undersigned faith leaders and organizations, write with great concern about Senate Bill 1140 as passed by the State Legislature on May 3, 2018. We write to ask that you veto SB 1140.

If signed, SB 1140 would permit child welfare agencies that receive taxpayer dollars and participate in government-supported child welfare services to discriminate against children and prospective parents. As such, the bill would allow these agencies to ignore the best interests of the children they agree to serve. We oppose the use of taxpayer dollars to subsidize discrimination and reject the idea that government-funded child welfare agencies should enjoy a blanket exemption from professional standards and practices that emphasize that every placement must, first and foremost, be made with the best interest of the child in mind.

Permitting taxpayer dollars to subsidize discriminatory practices such as this will hurt children in need of loving and supportive homes. There are more than 10,000 children in the Oklahoma foster care system, approximately 4,300 of whom are eligible for adoption. In 2016, almost 300 Oklahoma youth “aged out” of the foster care system, leaving them at a higher risk for poverty, homelessness, incarceration, and early parenthood than youth adopted while in foster care. This bill will make it harder for the children of the Oklahoma foster care system to find their forever home.

As people of faith and faith-based organizations, we celebrate the important work of so many faith-based child welfare agencies that support foster youth. We are also deeply committed to religious freedom, but that freedom doesn’t give anyone the right to impose their beliefs on others or to put children in harm’s way. To argue that religious freedom justifies the use of taxpayer dollars to discriminate against children and prospective parents is a distortion of such freedom, and a misunderstanding of civil rights law.

We are partners in the sacred work of those faith-based child welfare agencies seeking to unite children with forever families and share their calling to build a world of wholeness and compassion. Further, our values as Americans and as people of faith compel us to ensure that every child finds their forever home, and that every family that
can provide a safe, supportive, and loving home for a child is matched with the child that will make their family whole.

Again, we urge you to reject this discriminatory bill. Please do not allow the harms in SB 1140 to become law.

Sincerely,

Oklahoma Faith Leaders, Congregations, and Organizations (78)
Dr. Joseph Bessler, Phillips Theological Seminary, Tulsa
Rev. Tim Blodget, Southminster Presbyterian Church, Tulsa
Rev. Kayla Bonewell, Cathedral of Hope & Church of the Open Arms, Oklahoma City
Rev. Geoffrey Brewster, Phillips Theological Seminary, Tulsa
Rev. EvaMarie Campbell, Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Rev. Jenny Markham Clewell, Mosaic United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
Rev. April Coates, United Methodist Church, Ponca City
Rev. Kelli Driscoll Crews, Bethany Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tulsa
Rev. Dr. Bill Crowell, St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Rev. Shelly Coulter Daigle, United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Rev. Dr. Mark Davies, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City
Rev. Leslie A. Dotson, Tulsa Interfaith Alliance, Tulsa
Rev. Nancy J. Eggen, Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the United Church of Christ, Tulsa
Rev. Cathey Edwards, Hope Unitarian Church, Tulsa
Rev. Tracy L. Evans, Presbyterian Church (USA), Norman
Rabbi Marc Boone Fitzerman, Congregation B’nai Emunah, Tulsa
Rev. Todd Freeman, College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa
Rev. Twila Gibbens, United Methodist, Tulsa
Rev. Jim Gragg, United Methodist, Oklahoma City
Minister Edith Guffey, Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the United Church of Christ
Jennifer Harmon EcOSB, Grey Robe Benedictines, Tulsa
Rabbi Vered Harris, Temple B’nai Israel, Oklahoma City
Rev. Jeannie Himes, St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church, Norman
Rev. Doug Inhofe, Unitarian, Tulsa
Rabbi Abby Jacobson, Emanuel Synagogue, Oklahoma City
Rabbi Daniel S. Kaiman, Congregation B’nai Emunah, Tulsa
Rev. Joshua Langille-Hoppe, McLoud First United Methodist Church, McLoud
Rev. Dr. Marlin Lavanhar, All Souls Unitarian Church, Tulsa
Rev. Marla Lobo, United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
Rev. Jen Logsdon-Kellogg, Quail Springs United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
Rev. Dr. Jennifer Long, United Methodist Church, Oologah
Rev. M. Nathan Mattox, University United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Rev. Dr. Deborah Meinke, Presbyterian Church (USA), Stillwater
Rev. Dr. Robin R. Meyers, Mayflower Congregational UCC Church, Oklahoma City
Rev. Dr. Kirt E. Moelling, St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church, Broken Arrow
Rev. Sara Pugh Montgomery, Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Rev. Chris Moore, Fellowship Congregational Church UCC, Tulsa
Rev. Trina Bose North, Crown Heights United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
Deaconess Shelly Owen, United Methodist Church, Glenpool
Dr. Gary Peluso-Verend, Phillips Theological Seminary, Tulsa
Dr. Bruce Prescott, Baptist, Norman
Dr. R. Mitch Randall, EthicsDaily.com, Norman
Rev. Courtney Richards, Harvard Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa
Deacon Cindy Rieger, NorthHaven Church, Norman
Rev. David B. Rose, United Methodist, Oklahoma City
Rev. Susan Ross, United Methodist, Stillwater
Rev. Jeremy L. Sanders, United Methodist, Oklahoma City
Rev. Marcia Shoemaker, United Methodist, Tulsa
Rabbi James L. Simon, Temple Israel, Tulsa
Rev. Scott A. Spencer, Mosaic United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
Cantor Faith Steinsnyder, Temple Israel, Tulsa
Pastor Evan Taylor, East Side Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tulsa
Rev. Bryan Tener, Grace United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
Rev. William F. Todd, United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
Rev. Lori Walke, Mayflower Congregational United Church UCC, Oklahoma City
Rev. David Wheeler, First Congregational Church UCC, Norman
Deaconess Sandra W. Wickberg, Saint Paul's United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Rev. David Wiggs, Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Rev. Tony Zahn, United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City

*Affiliations are listed for identification purposes*

Bethany Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tulsa
Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Cathedral of Hope & Church of the Open Arms, Oklahoma City
College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa
East Side Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Tulsa
Emanuel Synagogue, Oklahoma City
Fellowship Congregational Church UCC, Tulsa
First Congregational Church UCC, Norman
Hope Unitarian Church, Tulsa
The Interfaith Alliance Foundation of Oklahoma
Jewish Federation of Greater Oklahoma City
Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ, Oklahoma City
Mosaic United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
North Texas/Oklahoma Anti-Defamation League
Phillips Theological Seminary, Tulsa
Quail Springs United Methodist Church, Oklahoma City
St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, Tulsa
Temple Israel, Tulsa
United Church of Christ in Kansas and Oklahoma Conference

**National Religious and Faith-Based Organizations (41)**
African American Ministers In Action—Equal Justice Task Force
Ameinu
As the Spirit Moves Us
Avodah
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Catholics for Choice
Columbia Theological Seminary
DignityUSA
Disciples Justice Action Network
Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance
Equal Partners in Faith
EthicsDaily.com
Faith in Public Life
Faith Matters Network
The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries
Global Faith & Justice Project
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
Institute for Welcoming Resources
Integrity USA - The Episcopal Rainbow
Intersections International
Interfaith Alliance
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Community Action
Keshet
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Metropolitan Community Churches
Muslims for Progressive Values
National Coalition of American Nuns
National Council of Jewish Women
New Ways Ministry
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute
SOJOURN
Tivnu: Building Justice
T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Uri L’Tzedek: Orthodox Social Justice
Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)
The Workmen’s Circle
YATOM: The Jewish Foster & Adoption Network