

**General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022
Archives' Research Report**

Resolution No.: 2022-D046
Title: Supporting Child Welfare Systems and Foster Care
Proposer: Ms. Janelle Grant
Topic: Children, Family

Directly Related: (Attached)

1994-B109 Express the Mind of the House of Bishops on Children and Families

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

None

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.

D046 - Supporting Child Welfare Systems and Foster Care

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Ms. Janelle Grant

Endorsed by: Ms. Laura Russell, Ms. Sarah Lawton

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 08 - Social Justice & United States Policy

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That this 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church affirm the need for governments, The Episcopal Church, and all people to support the child welfare system and the needs of children who are in foster care as well as their families; and be it further

Resolved, that the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church acknowledge that children caught in the child welfare system are some of the most vulnerable individual members of our society and we all have a responsibility for ensuring their safety and well-being; and be it further

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church commit to working towards a just child welfare system by supporting legislation that:

- Creates a system where children of color are not unfairly over-represented;
- Ensures protections for children in foster care of all sexual orientations, and gender identities, recognizing their unique needs;
- Ensures protections for adults seeking to be foster parents that they not be discriminated against because of their race/ethnic background, gender, age, marital status, family size, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation, or any other factor not relevant to being a good foster parent;
- Creating an equal access to resources and funding for all children who are involved in child protective and foster care systems;

- Create adequate training and funding for caseworkers in the child welfare system;
- Create a right to counsel for all parties involved in the foster care system;
- Create a continuum of care for youth aging out of foster care that includes counseling, medical care, education, housing and other resources;
- Urging full flexible funding for sufficient resources for the child welfare system, especially for guardianship, reunification, education and counseling; and be it further

Resolved, that the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church urge Episcopalians to prayerfully consider how they can support children in foster care, through fostering, mentorship, or other forms of support; and be it further

Resolved, that this 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church direct the Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations to advocate to the U.S. government on behalf of The Episcopal Church for reform to the child welfare system to ensure sufficient resources, protections for children and families, and support for children as they transition; and that the Episcopal Public Policy Network assist with this issue in their capacity.

Explanation

At any given point there are over 400,000 children in the American foster care system. Children enter the foster care system because they have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by their parents or guardians. Currently, many pieces of the child welfare system are broken, and foster children can suffer as a result.

As part of the Christian duty to care for our neighbors and God's creation, it is critical that we focus our attention to care for some of the most vulnerable children in our communities, foster youth. Like everyone, the youth in the foster care system deserve the support of a loving family and community. The system should be reformed so that more children can be safely reunified with their families or quickly moved into adoptive homes and live a healthy, fulfilling, and dignified life in the meantime.

While many foster youths are placed in a private home of a state-certified caregiver or with a family member approved by the state, around 10 percent of foster youth are still housed in group homes or institutions.[1] Plus, some children are placed by child protective agencies with friends or families outside of foster care systems, thus depriving the families of any resources to assist in caring for the children. Research has demonstrated that children placed in stable family-based foster care have greater positive outcomes than children placed in group homes.[2] This emphasizes a need to allocate more resources to expand foster agency recruitment and support foster families so that every child in the foster care system can live in a stable family-based environment as they await their chance for family reunification or adoption.

It is also critical that potential adoptive parents receive adequate support as over 100,000 kids in the foster care system are waiting to be adopted as their parents' parental rights were legally terminated.[3] Typically, children wait for over a year and a half before they are adopted. As many as five percent of them have waited longer than five years to be adopted.[4] For every child to have a chance to be placed in a forever family more families will have to look towards adoption. The Episcopal Church could support foster youth by

encouraging prayerful consideration among our own families and advocacy for more government support towards funding more resources to recruit and support adoptive parents.

LGBTQ youth are over-represented in foster care, where they are more likely to experience discrimination, abuse, and neglect. Similarly, children of color are also overrepresented in the foster care system and more likely than white families to experience negative outcomes.[5] Special care must be taken to ensure that the foster care system provides youth and their foster families with the resources to accommodate the specific needs of LGBT youth and children of color. Specific protections like banning conversion therapy are also immediately necessary to ensure the protection of children in the foster care system.

Unfortunately, many children in the foster care system aren't adopted or reunited with their parents before they age out of the system (18 or 21 depending on the state). Approximately, twenty thousand foster youth age out of foster care without permanent families annually.[6] Individuals that age out of the foster system without forever families are less likely to graduate high school or go to college and they have a higher likelihood of homelessness, unemployment, and incarceration than the general population. An integral part of supporting individuals going through the foster care system is supporting the expansion of necessary resources that aid their transition into adulthood.

As Christians there are many ways in which we can support every individual involved in the foster system so that we can nurture the most vulnerable children so that they can live lives full of love, hope, happiness, and dignity.

[1] <https://www.childrensrights.org/newsroom/fact-sheets/foster-care/>

[2] <https://fosteringchamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CHAMPS-Family-based-care-brief-1.pdf>

[3] <https://www.adoptuskids.org/meet-the-children/children-in-foster-care/about-the-children> (117,000 children waiting to be adopted)

[4] <https://www.childrensrights.org/newsroom/fact-sheets/foster-care/>

[5] <https://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/disproportionality-and-race-equity-in-child-welfare.aspx>

[6] <https://www.adoptuskids.org/meet-the-children/children-in-foster-care/about-the-children> (approximately 20,000 youth age out of foster care annually)



Resolution Number: 1994-B109
Title: Express the Mind of the House of Bishops on Children and Families
Legislative Action Taken: Adopted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the House of Bishops, called in part to be teachers, commit as individuals to a minimum of two days per month to issues impacting children and families in their respective communities by being "in the streets" to better comprehend the difficulties and risks to which children and families are presently subjected, and thus provide leadership in educating the Diocese to the issues, as well as identifying and providing sources of assistance both educationally and physically in diminishing the crisis and risks to which children and families are currently subjected; we will make every effort to place children and families at risk at the center of our communities' agendas.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), p. 286.