

The *Catholic Charities of West Michigan* Case

Case Name: *Catholic Charities West Michigan v. Michigan Department of Health and Human Services*

Case Status: On April 25, 2019, ADF attorneys filed a lawsuit on behalf of Catholic Charities West Michigan challenging the state's targeting of faith-based foster care and adoption agencies.



Significance: Whether the government can force faith-based organizations, including non-profit adoption and foster care providers, to violate their religious beliefs.

Background: Catholic Charities West Michigan is one of the largest social services providers in West Michigan, and has been serving for over 70 years. In just the past 10 years, it has placed over 4,500 children in loving homes, while providing a wide array of child welfare services, including a vital foster care program. As a Catholic organization, Catholic Charities believes and adheres to the teachings and doctrines of the Catholic Church, including its beliefs about marriage. Even though state law explicitly protects Catholic Charities' freedom to act according to its faith, Michigan's newly elected Attorney General Dana Nessel has harshly [criticized that law](#) and is now [openly flouting it to punish Catholic Charities](#) for its Catholic identity and beliefs. Now, the state's Department of Health and Human Services is threatening to terminate Catholic Charities' contract unless it agrees to violate its beliefs by placing children with same-sex couples.

Key Points

- Adoption and foster care providers like Catholic Charities West Michigan exist to help children, not to affirm the desires of adults.
- More adoption and foster care providers mean more children have the chance to be adopted or cared for by a foster family.
- The state is threatening to close Catholic Charities West Michigan simply because of its Catholic views about marriage. That is not keeping kids first.
- The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled twice—first in *Obergefell* and then again in *Masterpiece*—that the government must respect the belief that marriage is between one man and one woman.

Key Facts

- In Michigan, there are roughly 13,000 children in foster care, with approximately 3,000 of those foster children available for adoption at any given time.
- Catholic Charities West Michigan has placed over 4,500 children in loving homes in the past decade.
- Michigan's law specifically protects the right of faith-based adoption and foster care providers to operate according to their conscience and religious convictions.
- Michigan law protects faith-based adoption and foster care providers, but its attorney is ignoring it to punish them for their faith.
- This is anti-religious hostility, and it forces children to pay the price.

The Bottom Line: Every child deserves the chance to be adopted or cared for in by a foster family. Faith-based adoption and foster care providers who help children find a loving home should be celebrated, not targeted for their faith.