

# PHILADELPHIA ARCHDIOCESE SUES CITY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the city of Philadelphia barring a Catholic agency from its foster care services:

For over 100 years, the Catholic Church in Philadelphia has been serving children in need. Now the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has been forced to sue the city for the right to continue doing so. It is a suit that must be won, for the sake of the children and the defense of religious freedom.

The city of Philadelphia—even as it issued an urgent call for 300 new foster parents—has abruptly barred Catholic Social Services (CSS) from placing children in foster homes. They have done this despite the fact that CSS is one of the top-rated foster care agencies in the city, and despite the fact that Philadelphia has more than 6,000 foster children in need of the kind of loving homes that CSS provides.

The city has barred CSS because, as a Catholic agency, it adheres to Church teaching that marriage is a sacrament reserved to one man and one woman. As such, it cannot place foster children with same-sex couples.

This does not mean that same-sex couples are prevented from becoming foster parents. Philadelphia contracts with dozens of other agencies that do place children with same-sex couples. So that is not the issue.

Rather, the issue is the use of government's coercive powers to force the Catholic Church to either compromise its moral teachings or abandon its services to people in need. Those who depend on Catholic social services—in this case, innocent children—are only so much “collateral damage” in this war on the Church.

And make no mistake, this is but one battle in a nationwide war against the Church, its teachings, and the conscience rights of people of faith. Across the country—in Boston, San Francisco, Illinois, even in our nation's capital—Catholic agencies have had to abandon their foster care and adoption services because they cannot place children with same-sex couples.

This underscores the need for the kind of religious exemption that Gov. Mary Fallin signed into law in Oklahoma last week. Governments, whether at the local, state or national level, must not be allowed to advance their ideological agenda by trampling on conscience rights or religious freedom; and innocent children must be protected against those who would use them as pawns in this war against religion.

The Catholic League urges all Catholics to stand with Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput in this latest battle for religious liberty.