



In this July 28, 2019 photo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston Daniel DiNardo acknowledges the Archdiocese Youth Council during the Archdiocesan Youth Conference Sunday Mass in Houston. The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston wants to become a foster care provider in Texas, but only if the Catholic organization is exempt from a federal rule meant to protect LGBT people from discrimination. The archdiocese is teaming up with the Texas Attorney General's office and the Department of Family and Protective Services to challenge the rule that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identify, and other characteristics. (AP/Houston Chronicle/Marie D. De Jesus)

by The Associated Press

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A Texas archdiocese wants to become a foster care provider, but only if it can be exempt from adhering to federal safeguards against anti-LGBT discrimination.

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is joining the Texas Attorney General's office and the Department of Family and Protective Services in challenging the rule that prohibits discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, and other characteristics, the [Houston Chronicle](#) reported.

"The archdiocese may only provide foster care services consistent with its sincerely held beliefs on Catholic doctrine and social teaching," said the lawsuit filed on Oct. 31. "As such, the archdiocese cannot provide home studies and certifications for unmarried cohabitating or same-sex married couples."

Texas has had a long-lasting shortage of foster care placements that has forced some children to sleep in state offices overnight.

Child welfare advocates warn that the lawsuit could reduce the state's already scarce pool of foster parents.

"When you completely shut the door to many good people because they are same-sex or single parents, it isn't about fixing capacity, it's about restricting capacity to certain groups," said Will Francis, the executive director of the National Association of Social Workers Texas Chapter.

Neither Attorney General Ken Paxton nor the DFPS responded to the newspaper's request for comment regarding the lawsuit.

A day after the lawsuit was filed, the federal Department of Health and Human Services revealed its plans to rewrite an [Obama-era anti-discrimination rule](#) to allow faith-based foster care and adoption agencies to exclude LGBT parents.

The lawsuit is the latest clash over [religious liberty and discrimination protections](#) in Texas.

Jonah Dycus, a spokesman for the archdiocese — which is represented by the Washington D.C.-based Becket Fund for Religious Liberty — said that the lawsuit does not aim to exclude anyone, including LGBT couples, from becoming foster

parents.

“The archdiocese’s only goal in joining Texas’s suit is to expand the number of parents and providers available to help children find loving homes,” Dycus said in a written statement. “To that end, we hope that this lawsuit will remove a major barrier that is keeping religious organizations out of foster care and instead will allow Texas to take an ‘all-hands on deck’ approach to foster care and adoption ministry.”

It is not clear how the attorney general’s office formed a relationship with the archdiocese. Nick Reaves, counsel at Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, declined to comment on how it happened.

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