

Faith-Affirming Foster Care at the Supreme Court

Fulton v. City of Philadelphia



WHO Heroes of the foster care system

Foster moms
Sharonell
Fulton and Toni
Simms-Busch

More than **25 years**
partnering
with the Catholic
Church's foster
agency

Over
45 kids
fostered

WHAT

The government is discriminating against the Catholic Church's foster care agency in Philadelphia because of its religious beliefs. This harms black, disabled, and older foster children while also preventing foster parents like Sharonell Fulton—a single mom of color and a hero of the foster care system—from continuing to care for kids in need.

WHEN

- March 2018: government officials excluded families who foster with the Catholic Church's agency.
- November 4, 2020: the case will be argued to the Supreme Court.
- June 2021: the Supreme Court is likely to issue its **decision**.



IF FOSTER MOMS

Win

FOSTER FAMILIES

✓	Families like Sharonell's are free to partner with an agency that affirms their religious beliefs.	✗
✓	Homes already certified by Catholic Social Services can reopen and immediately begin serving kids .	✗
✓	Foster families can continue partnering with a diverse array of private agencies.	✗

CHRISTIAN, JEWISH, MUSLIM, AND OTHER FAITH-AFFIRMING AGENCIES

✓	Catholic Social Services continues the Catholic Church's century-old ministry to children in need.	✗
✓	Catholic Social Services can continue serving all children regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.	✗
✓	Faith-affirming foster agencies across the country continue recruiting, certifying, and supporting thousands of foster families.	✗

LGBTQ COUPLES

✓	LGBTQ couples can continue to foster and adopt in all 50 states .	✓
✓	In Philadelphia, LGBTQ couples continue to foster with 29 different foster agencies (three of which are certified by the Human Rights Campaign for their excellent service to LGBTQ families).	✓

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

✓	Faith-affirming charitable ministries—like homeless shelters, soup kitchens, prison ministries and immigrant legal assistance—participate as full members of society without having to abandon their religious beliefs.	✗
✓	Religious groups are not punished because the government dislikes or disagrees with their religious beliefs.	✗
✓	Faith-affirming social service providers grow and flourish knowing that they can serve those in need without compromising the beliefs that motivate their service.	✗

This case has the potential to impact religious social service providers of all kinds—from homeless shelters and soup kitchens to Jewish pre-schools and Catholic universities. Without the freedom to serve consistent with their sincere religious beliefs, social services providers will be forced to the margins or closed down completely.

How Does Foster Care in Philadelphia *really* work?

1. RESEARCH AND EVALUATE

Families interested in fostering research and evaluate local agencies to find one that will be a good fit for them.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Philadelphia, there are **30 different private foster agencies** that can certify foster families, many with **unique focuses** and **specializations**.

2. PARTNER OR REFER

When a family reaches out to a foster agency, the agency must also determine if it can partner with the family or whether it should refer that family to another agency.

DID YOU KNOW?

Referrals are common and have worked for decades to help match families with the best possible foster care partner. Common referral reasons include: long waiting lists, location, Native American ancestry, language barriers, behavioral health, and disability.

3. HOME STUDY

Once a family matches with an agency, the agency will perform a “home study” to evaluate whether the family is ready to care for a foster child.

DID YOU KNOW?

These home studies require agencies to ask **deeply personal** questions and evaluate, among other things, the strengths and weaknesses of an applicant’s intimate relationships. Foster parents need to partner with an agency that can affirm their core beliefs and values throughout this process.

4. PLACEMENT

Once a foster family completes a home study, the foster agency will endorse and certify that family’s home. The government can then place a foster child with that family.

DID YOU KNOW?

Only agencies that partner with the government are allowed to perform home studies and provide the certifications necessary for that family to begin fostering.

5. SUPPORT

The family’s foster agency will continue to partner with them and support them throughout their foster care journey.

REFERRALS IN FOCUS

Referrals have worked for decades to protect diversity, religious liberty, and dignity in the foster care system.

Finding the right match between family and agency means: families will be **more supported**, provide **better homes** for children, and **stay fostering longer**.

