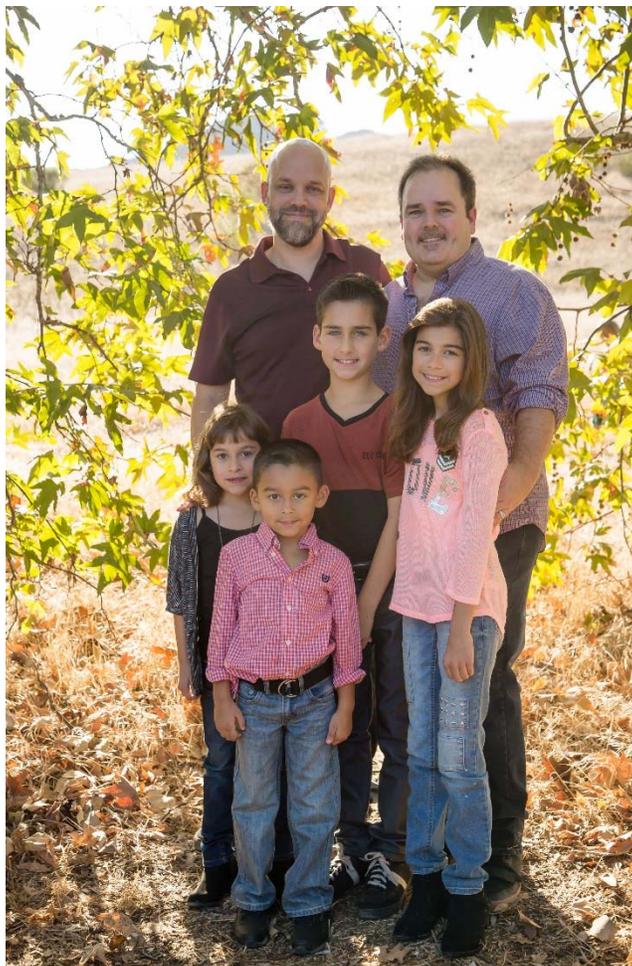


David Dickson
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February 27, 2020

Dear Chair Maloney, Chair Raskin, Ranking Member Jordan, and Ranking Member Roy:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony to the Committee for the hearing on *The Administration's Religious Liberty Assault on LGBT Rights*. I appreciate the opportunity to share my story, and to share why Congress must act to end discrimination in foster care and adoption, by passing Congressman John Lewis' bipartisan Every Child Deserves a Family Act, HR 3114. I am submitting my testimony via Family Equality, an organization representing LGBTQ families and LGBTQ people wishing to form families.

When me and my husband were foster parents back in Georgia we were told on several occasions that we were not receiving calls for placement because we were a "nontraditional family". We had three empty bedrooms to accept kids in need but we continuously were overlooked. We fought like

hell to get a placement and thank GOD we did because we now have four amazing kids. The road was long and painful, but we have a family to call our own now.

After fostering our four kids which came with several highs and lows, we were finally able to adopt our kids. I guess I should say my husband was able to adopt them through the foster care system. At the time the foster care system dropped me and my name from all paperwork once it moved from fostering to adoption. I was no longer recognized, and we had to find an attorney and judge that would allow me to do a second parent adoption in Georgia. At a time that should be a moment of celebration, we were forced emotionally and financially to make alternative plans to form our family. It was not even guaranteed but thankfully we found an attorney and judge willing to help us. It was a very humiliating and frightening experience.

I oppose discrimination in foster care and adoption based on religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity because:

Seeing our four kids now growing into such loving and caring people reminds me that every child in the foster care system deserves a chance, a home, and to be loved unconditionally. After eight years I still think about what all our kids went through at such a young age and it breaks my heart. I have seen and heard so many tragic stories during our time in the foster care system and to think that there are some that want to deny loving people from helping these kids in need is a tragedy in itself.