



**State Senator  
Kirk Watson  
District 14**

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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*The following is the floor statement from Sen. Watson delivered regarding House Bill 3859, which allows foster care providers to discriminate against children and families:*

So much effort has gone into this session to address a very real crisis in our system of child protection.

We started the session with recognition that our state wasn't acting in the best interest of the children who desperately need us. Our child protection system has been declared unconstitutional for its sorry failure to act in their best interest.

And we've done some good.

I believe everyone on this floor agrees we need to act in the best interest of the children.

And while everyone on this floor also wants to protect an individual's right to practice their religion, that doesn't allow us to ignore or shade our eyes from our obligation to make sure we're acting on our agreement to act in the child's best interests.

This bill puts the children who need us second.

Unfortunately, an effort to protect adults who voluntarily choose to be part of the system takes precedence over the children who do not.

Such an imbalance of rights not only could leave these children worse off than they are now, it opens the door to blatant discrimination against children and loving parents who might not share the same beliefs as some foster care providers.

It's a shame that this is being done in the name of child protection.

As we act in the name of religious freedom, I pray for these babies who through no fault of their own have been ripped from their homes and into our care.

I pray for these vulnerable children that needed us to do our best.

And I pray that God bless and protect them now, when we don't.

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