

No Difference Between Gay & Straight Parents Court Told

by 365Gay.com Newscenter Staff

Posted: March 24, 2004 5:14 p.m. ET

(Little Rock, Arkansas) A Little Rock court where the state's ban on gay foster parents is being challenged has been told there is no difference between gay parents and straight ones and that gays are no more likely than heterosexuals to be pedophiles.

Arkansas bars gays and lesbians from serving as foster parents, although the law does not prevent them from adopting.

The ban was imposed by the state Child Welfare Agency Review Board in March 1999. The board said it imposed the ban on households with gay adults in an effort to protect children from disease, violence, sexual abuse, neglect and instability.

In 2001 an attempt was made to ban gay adoption, but legislators refused.

Nebraska is the only other state to ban gay foster parents; Florida and Mississippi ban gay adoptions

The suit challenging the ban was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of four prospective foster parents.

The nonjury trial is being heard by Pulaski County Circuit Judge Tim Fox.

Michael Lamb, chief of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's section on Social and Emotional Development testified that there is no evidence to support the contention that gays can't be as good at parenting as heterosexuals.

Lamb said studies of children raised by both homosexual and heterosexual people show no more behavior problems for children reared by homosexuals. He also said children reared by gays are no more likely to become gay.

Being raised by gay parents would not have negative consequences for children, he said.

He also said that children don't necessarily require an adult male as one of their care givers. "It's become clear that the absence of a male figure is really not important," Lamb said.

He said children with behavioral problems rises from 15 percent in two-parent homes to 30 percent in single-parent homes. "There's a clear consensus that children are more likely to be maladjusted when raised by single parents," he said.

Dr. Fred Berlin, founder of the Sexual Disorders Clinic at Johns Hopkins University testified that heterosexual married men are just as likely to be pedophiles as gay men.

The court also heard from a Waldron, Arkansas man whose family has sheltered abused gay children at its own expense. William Wagner testified that he and his wife of 30 years were not allowed to become foster parents because his adult son, William, is gay and sometimes stays in their home.

The trial expected to continue through the week.

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