

WILLIAMS INSTITUTE, URBAN INSTITUTE RELEASE MAJOR STUDY ON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE BY LESBIANS & GAY MEN

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Today, the Williams Institute and the Urban Institute released a major study on adoption and foster care by lesbian and gay parents. The study uses census data and other government surveys to estimate for the first time the number of adopted and fostered children living with lesbian and gay parents in the United States and to provide a demographic portrait of these families. The research team also estimates the economic and social costs of banning such adoptions and foster care, a prospect under debate in legislatures and courts in several states.

Findings from the study include:

- More than 1 in 3 lesbians have given birth and 1 in 6 gay men have fathered or adopted a child.
- More than 50% of gay men and 41% of lesbians want to have a child.
- An estimated 2 million GLB people are interested in adopting.
- An estimated 65,500 adopted children are living with a lesbian or gay parent.
- Gay and lesbian parents are raising 4% of all adopted children in the United States.
- An estimated 14,100 foster children are living with lesbian or gay parents.
- Gay and lesbian parents are raising 3% of foster children in the United States.
- A national ban on GLB foster care could cost from \$87 to \$130 million.

Costs to individual states could range from \$100,000 to \$27 million “Our study documents that a significant number of GLB individuals and couples are raising adopted and fostered children and two million GLB people would consider adopting a child,” said Gary J. Gates, Senior Research Fellow at the Williams Institute, “GLB people appear to be an under-utilized resource for child welfare agencies desperately in need of families willing to foster and perhaps adopt children who have had a rough start in life,” Gates continued.

“Research documents that children raised by lesbian and gay parents do just fine,” said Gates. “Our study documents that lesbian and gay couples who adopt are older, more educated, and have greater economic resources to support their children than do other adoptive families.”

Currently, several states are considering laws and policies that would prevent GLB people from adopting and fostering. According to the study, such policy changes could bring additional and significant instability in the lives of youth in the foster care system. An estimated 9,300 to 14,000 children currently placed with existing GLB foster parents could be removed from those families. As a result, children in the foster care system who are available for adoption may remain there longer or might never be adopted at all. In particular, GLB youth are likely to lose out since GLB people might be more willing to provide placements for GLB youth.

“Instability is not good for children,” said Jennifer Macomber. “Studies show that the number of moves between placements is associated with multiple harmful outcomes for children, including academic, mental health, and behavioral problems. Children with fewer placements show better school achievement, less criminal activity, more social support, increased life satisfaction, greater housing stability, better self-support, and better caring for their own children.”

Additionally, the economic cost of banning GLB people from adopting and fostering could be significant. “Our research indicates that a national ban on GLB foster care could cost from \$87 to \$130 million,” said M.V. Lee Badgett, Research Director at the Williams Institute. “States would spend more on foster care as children who are removed from family settings would be placed in group or institutional care, at greater cost. States will also have to spend more money to recruit and train new foster parents.”