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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**July 22, 2011**

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### **CATHOLIC CHARITIES SEEKS TO OVERTURN 7 DECADES OF ADOPTION LAW**

The lawsuit by Catholic Charities seeking to force Illinois to continue to refer children to the agency for foster care and adoption services and receive state money seeks to overturn a seven-decade-old standard of adoption law, according to Equality Illinois, the state's largest organization advocating for full equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender ("LGBT") people.

"Illinois law since the 1940s has maintained that the best interest of the child is the gold standard when it comes to making foster care and adoption decisions," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. The best-interest-of-the-child standard has remained in state law and has been upheld in numerous court decisions since then.

"The desire by Catholic Charities to deviate from that is unacceptable for sound public policy, for the prospective parents who want to accept foster children and adoptive children, and especially for the children who need loving homes," Cherkasov said.

Catholic Charities in Springfield, Peoria and Joliet filed suit in Sangamon County Circuit Court in Springfield, Ill. earlier this month challenging the state's decision not to renew their foster care and adoption contracts on July 1, 2011. Catholic Charities filed its motions with the court this week.

"Catholic Charities wants to continue to receive state money -- public money -- to perform services even though it will not pledge to follow state law regarding making placements in the best interest of the child," said Randy Hannig, Director of Public Policy for Equality Illinois.

Equality Illinois believes that Catholic Charities is seeking to undermine the newly enacted law that allows same-gender couples to enter into civil unions and shift the focus away from its responsibility as a child welfare agency. "The established standard of making placements for foster care or adoption in the best interest of the child is not changed by the civil union law, and Catholic Charities should not be allowed to continue to accept public money if it does not intend to follow the established law," Hannig said.

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Equality Illinois was founded in 1991 to secure, protect and defend full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. It is the state's largest LGBT advocacy organization.