



March 31, 2026

Office of the City Council
117 W. Duval St., Suite 425
Jacksonville, FL 32202

RE: Opposition to City Council Bill 2026-186

Dear Councilman Rory Diamond and Members of the Jacksonville City Council:

On behalf of an adoptee-led organization committed to ethics, transparency, and accountability in child welfare, we strongly oppose City Council Bill 2026-186.

This proposal raises serious concerns about the allocation of a substantial portion of public funds toward a solution in a city that has not experienced a baby surrender or abandonment case in well over a decade. At a minimum, it is difficult to justify diverting hundreds of thousands of tax-payer dollars, not including thousands more in additional ongoing maintenance costs, to address a problem that does not appear to exist in Jacksonville.

More broadly, baby abandonment boxes introduce a system that replaces transparent, regulated processes for a mother to relinquish her baby with an impersonal mechanisms that bypass human or medical oversight, documentation, and informed decision-making. They conceal the infant's identity at the moment of surrender, effectively removing a human being's access to their own accurate birth records and family medical history for the rest of their life, while also eliminating meaningful opportunities for counseling or support for a mother who is clearly in crisis, and will have to live with a decision she cannot undo once the door locks. Global studies show infant relinquishment is strongly linked to higher risks of suicide and long-term mental health challenges for both birth mothers and adoptees, and that would potentially be an outcome of these installations.¹

This should raise serious ethical concerns for your council. Evidence from research and expert analysis, including work from Yale University, indicates there is no concrete proof that these boxes reduce unsafe infant abandonment.² In Germany, where baby boxes have been used for over 20 years, studies found no significant reduction in infant abandonment or deaths.³ In November 2024, a group of nearly 100 medical professionals, adoption experts, and child welfare advocates sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) urging them to address the risks of safe haven baby boxes. Experts have further cautioned that rather than preventing dangerous abandonment, these systems normalize and may even encourage anonymous surrender in situations where parents might otherwise seek help, temporary support, or alternatives that would preserve the right of the child to be raised by their own mother in their own family.

These concerns extend beyond the child to other family members as well. Anonymous surrender can permanently deny non-surrendering parents, including fathers and extended relatives, any awareness of the child's existence or the opportunity to assume care. Putative Father Registries cannot function when

the mother's identity is legally erased. None of these practices align with modern adoption standards or the best interests of the child.

Adoption and child welfare systems must prioritize transparency, accountability, and the long-term well-being of children and families. Abandonment boxes create a shadow child welfare system, with a promise of anonymity that modern DNA testing has made unrealistic. They also encourage women to maintain secrecy during pregnancy under this false promise of anonymity, discouraging them from seeking medical care or support. This increases health risks for both mother and infant and prevents intervention in cases of abuse, coercion, or mental health crises such as postpartum depression. By reinforcing a framework in which separation is normalized without sufficient safeguards or oversight, these systems also introduce risks of infant trafficking, as there is no way to verify who is placing a child into the box. Does Jacksonville, Florida believe this represents humane treatment for an infant?

In addition, these boxes expand a private product under the guise of public policy. Baby boxes in the United States are controlled entirely by Safe Haven Baby Boxes Inc., a multi-million-dollar ministry that manufactures, installs, trains staff, operates a referral hotline, lobbies lawmakers, and publicly markets each use. This raises serious questions about the motivations behind a privately controlled system being implemented with public funds.

Given the lack of demonstrated local need, the absence of evidence supporting effectiveness, and the ethical concerns surrounding anonymity, oversight, and resource allocation, we respectfully urge you to reconsider this proposal. In a jurisdiction with no recent pattern of abandonment cases, why prioritize a costly infrastructure solution over investments in prenatal care, mental health resources, and family support systems that address the root causes of crisis situations? Experts consistently point to these supports as more effective and humane responses than mechanisms that facilitate permanent separation.

Ultimately, what is known is that adoption is a multi-billion-dollar industry, and Safe Haven Baby Boxes create a mechanism for permanent family separation without meaningful oversight or accountability, effectively increasing the supply of adoptable infants at the expense of women, infants, and families.

We are then left to ask: what specific problem is this policy intended to solve in Jacksonville, and why invest substantial public funds into a system that research shows does not achieve its stated goals?

For these reasons, we urge you to vote NO on City Council Bill 2026-186.

Adoptee Advocates of Michigan

Valerie Lemieux, Founder

References

1. Research on adoption/relinquishment outcomes and long-term mental health impacts; see also literature on separation trauma and outcomes for birth parents and adoptees (e.g., various longitudinal and public health studies on relinquishment and mental health correlations).
2. Yale University Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics analyses concluding no evidence that baby boxes reduce unsafe infant abandonment or improve outcomes compared to existing Safe Haven laws.
3. German evaluations of baby hatch ("Babyklappe") systems since 2000 showing no statistically significant reduction in infant abandonment or infant mortality rates associated with their use.