



April 2, 2026

Members of the Jacksonville City Council  
Mayor Donna Deegan  
City of Jacksonville, Florida

**Re: City Council Bill 2026-186 — Proposed Installation of 14 Safe Haven Baby Boxes**

Dear Mayor Deegan and Members of the City Council:

The National Center on Adoption and Permanency (NCAP) is a not-for-profit educational organization dedicated to improving laws, policies and practices – based on the best available research and experience – so that they enable all children and their families to succeed. As head of NCAP, I write to respectfully urge the Council to vote against Bill 2026-186, which would appropriate over \$300,000 in public funds for the installation of 14 Safe Haven Baby Boxes (SHBBs) in Jacksonville.

Our concern is not with the caring intent behind this proposal, which we share. Rather, it is that the available evidence does not support the conclusion that baby boxes are an effective or appropriate response to the problem they are meant to address – and that a significant expenditure of public funds on an unproven intervention would come at the cost of more-effective alternatives.

The empirical case for baby boxes is weak. According to statistics compiled by A Safe Haven for Newborns, only three cases of unsafe infant abandonment have been recorded in Duval County over the past quarter century – in 2007, 2009, and 2012. Moreover, since Florida began installing baby boxes in 2020, documented use remains rare, with the first recorded instance not occurring until 2023. The modest scale of the problem does not justify an expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars on infrastructure to address it, particularly when the infrastructure has not been shown to reduce unsafe abandonments in states that have deployed it widely.

The Donaldson Adoption Institute – a nonpartisan nonprofit research organizations that I had the honor to lead – documented that in states with safe haven laws, unsafe abandonments continued at the same rate after enactment as before. In California, Texas, and Florida, the numbers tracked after the passage of safe haven legislation were comparable to or higher than legal ones.

The Institute concluded that the women most likely to abandon a newborn unsafely (those in acute psychological distress, often denying or concealing their pregnancies) are precisely the population least likely to make deliberate use of a designated drop-off device. Policy built on the assumption that a baby box will interrupt that crisis has not been supported by research or experience.

There are also broader child welfare principles that merit consideration. Federal child welfare frameworks, including the Adoption and Safe Families Act, emphasize family preservation, informed consent, and permanency planning – principles that anonymous box surrenders bypass.

Children placed into baby boxes have no birth records, no medical history, and no legal pathway to learn their origins. This is not a peripheral concern: genetics experts have noted that family medical history is among the strongest predictors of risk for thousands of inherited conditions. The unambiguous trend in modern adoption practice has moved decisively toward openness and identity preservation; baby boxes move in the opposite direction.

Regulatory and liability questions also deserve scrutiny. Safe Haven Baby Boxes, Inc., the sole manufacturer of these devices, publicly confirms that its products are not certified by Underwriters Laboratories. Electrical devices that lack UL certification expose the municipalities that install them to potential liability for injury or property damage. The Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics at Yale University's Infant Abandonment Working Group, which has studied these issues extensively, has called for federal oversight of the rapidly expanding SHBB network.

None of this is to minimize the genuine anguish that can accompany a crisis pregnancy, or the real value of ensuring that an infant in a desperate situation reaches safety. We fully support that goal. What we respectfully suggest is that the funds contemplated by this bill would do more good invested in programs with demonstrated efficacy: confidential counseling and case management for women in crisis pregnancies; expanded access to prenatal and postnatal care; crisis nursery capacity; and family preservation services that help parents navigate the resources available to them without permanently severing the parent-child bond. These approaches address the underlying conditions that drive newborn abandonment in the first place.

We have no doubt that the sponsors of this bill are acting out of genuine concern for vulnerable infants. We share that concern. We ask only that the Council weigh it against the evidence before committing public funds. A vote against 2026-186 is not a vote against helping mothers and babies in crisis. It is a vote for doing so in ways the evidence suggests will actually work.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Pertman', written in a cursive style.

Adam Pertman, President  
National Center on Adoption and Permanency