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February 2nd, 2015

The Honourable Nikki Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Re: Foster Care/Adoption Berkeley County, James & Mary Johnson

Dear Governor Haley,

Thank you for your time and consideration in reading this letter. Obviously, since I am taking the time to write it, it is of great importance to me.

I have read that you are a military spouse, as I am. I hope that that will give you some connection to myself and the ordeal that we are going through. As I am sure that you know, as military families, sometimes we have to be separated from our loved ones for the good of the country. Being separated now, for bureaucratic red tape and stalling methods, is very hard to take.

On January 9th, 2013, after much waiting and many prayers, our family received our first foster child, James. We knew right away that given the opportunity, we would love to adopt him. Both of his parents (we have since learned that his father is not his bio father) are convicted sex offenders, at the time they lived in very inappropriate housing, and bio Mom has some learning disabilities. It was determined early on that the goal would be Termination of Parental rights and adoption, and we were chosen to be first choice of adoption. Last November, the birth Mom gave birth to a second child, little Mary Margaret (we call her Maggie). She was a preemie and very tiny, and of course, we wanted her, too, so she came home from the hospital to us.

At that time, the judge refused to terminate parental rights without at least a 6 month treatment plan. The parents failed the treatment plan, and last October during a permanency plan hearing, Termination of Parental Rights and us adopting was named the plan. Here we are, no closer to any of that happening, and no reason for the delay in sight. The parents have since separated, and birth Mom is currently in jail in Greenville, SC.

My husband, A US Sailor of 18 years, had to be transferred back to a ship, the USS Eisenhower in Norfolk, VA last June. I have stayed behind in hopes that we could finish up the Termination of Parental Rights, he could come down for the adoption, and we could all once again be together. My husband dotes on these kids, and my son misses his Daddy so much. He doesn't know any other.

I know that when you were running for re-election, you had promised to help cut out some of this nonsense that we are currently going through. There is no reason why this has to keep getting pushed back. These kids could be off of the plate of DSS and in a forever family that can take care of ourselves, without government help. I don't know if this is something that you could look into, I know that both my kids and I would be very thankful if you could.

Again, I thank you for your time and consideration. My kids are James and Mary Johnson, and we are working with Berkely County DSS.

Most Respectfully,

Sharon Gill