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Lawmaker Backs Cash Payments for Foster Families

By The Moscow Times

February 04, 2013

A key State Duma deputy has proposed one-time payouts for foster as well as adoptive families in a bid to reduce the number of children living in orphanages, RIA-Novosti reported on Tuesday.

Olga Batalina, first deputy head of the Duma Committee on Family, Women and Children, said the payments were needed to encourage foster families to take in orphans, about 69 percent of whom are over 10 years old and therefore less likely to be adopted.

"It's unfair to leave behind those who accept a child into foster or other care," said Batalina, who co-authored the controversial law that banned U.S. adoptions and sparked discussions about how help Russia's estimated 120,000 orphans.

Earlier, the Education and Science Ministry proposed making 100,000 ruble ($3,300) payments to families that adopt.

While most discussions have centered around closing orphanages, which are often crowded and impersonal, and placing orphans in families, Duma Vice Speaker Sergei Neverov said Tuesday that the institutions should be “restructured,” not shuttered, RIA-Novosti reported.

Speaking in response to a Moscow region plan to close 16 facilities by 2017, Neverov said several regions had institutions that had nothing in common with old-fashioned orphanages, which experts say can stunt children's emotional development.

Meanwhile, children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov has reiterated Russia's opposition to adoption by same-sex couples, saying that the Constitution and international law forbid it, according to a video posted on Rossiiskaya Gazeta's website Monday.

The policy looks likely to hit families in France, a top destination for outgoing Russian adoptions, whose lower house of parliament last week approved a bill that would legalize gay marriage.

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