

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Brian Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose proposals that would politicize the charitable nonprofit and philanthropic community by repealing or weakening current federal tax law protections that prohibit 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates.

Nonpartisanship is a cornerstone principle that has strengthened the public's trust of the charitable community. In exchange for enjoying tax-exempt status and the ability to receive tax-deductible contributions, 501(c)(3) organizations – charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, and foundations – agree to not engage in “any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.”

That provision of law protects the integrity and independence of charitable nonprofits and foundations. It shields the entire 501(c)(3) community against the rancor of partisan politics so the charitable community can be a safe haven where individuals of all beliefs come together to solve community problems free from partisan divisions. It screens out doubts and suspicions regarding ulterior partisan motives of charitable organizations, as undoubtedly would occur if even just a few charitable organizations engaged in partisan politics. Nonpartisan credibility is critical to the ability of 501(c)(3) organizations to work with elected officials of all parties at the local, state, and federal levels to address community needs.

Charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, are free to speak on important matters of the day and advocate on public policy issues and legislation. Private foundations, while barred from most lobbying activities, are free to engage in public debates, promote public education efforts, and fund a wide range of issue-focused activities. The relevant language in Section 501(c)(3) merely prohibits partisan campaign intervention, defined to include endorsing or opposing candidates for public office, publishing or distributing statements for or against candidates, or using tax-deductible and other resources to support partisan campaign activities.

We are united in opposing any and all efforts to weaken or repeal this longstanding protection in the federal tax code (sometimes called the Johnson Amendment) that President Eisenhower signed into law in 1954. Weakening the law by allowing leaders of individual 501(c)(3) entities to endorse candidates for public office and engage in some partisan electioneering activities would damage the integrity and effectiveness of all charitable organizations and spawn litigation as innovative partisans seek to expand gray areas in the proposed legislation. Repealing the Johnson Amendment, an approach promoted by the President and some in Congress, would damage the federal Treasury as people take tax deductions for political contributions they could then funnel through charitable nonprofits, undercut fair elections by providing a loophole to avoid campaign contribution disclosure laws, and empower politicians to exert pressure for access to foundation assets and charitable funds for their own partisan campaigns rather than for the public good.

April 5, 2017

Page 2

We urge you to join us in opposing efforts to weaken and/or repeal the current law that for six decades has successfully protected the integrity and effectiveness of charitable nonprofits and foundations by keeping them apart from partisan politics.

Respectfully,

Hawaii Organizations

		Hawaii Public Charter School Network	
'Ai Pohaku- The Stone Eaters	Wai'anae	Hawaii Public Health Association	Honolulu
Aloha Medical Mission		Hawaii Youth Services Network	Honolulu
Aloha Performing Arts Company	Kealahou	Hawaiian Humane Society	Honolulu
Aloha United Way	Honolulu	Hawaii's Thousand Friends	
Arcadia Community Services	Honolulu	Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies	Honolulu
Big Island Mediation, Inc. d/b/a	Kamuela	Helping Hands Hawaii	Honolulu
West Hawaii Mediation Center		Heritage Hall, Inc.	Paia
Blue Planet Foundation	Honolulu	Hi`ilei Aloha LLC	Honolulu
Breastfeeding Hawaii	Kaneohe	Hilo-Hamakua Community Development Corporation	Hawaii
Business Plans Hawaii	Honolulu	Hina Mauka	Kaneohe
Ceeds of Peace	Honolulu	HIVET	Honolulu
Central Union Church of Honolulu	Honolulu	Honolulu Community Action Program	Honolulu
Child & Family Service	Ewa Beach	Honolulu Museum of Art	Honolulu
CHOW Project	Honolulu	Honua Films, Inc.	
Community Based Case Management		Hui Kako'o O' Laupahoehoe	Papaaloa
CommUnity Works, LLC	Kailua	IHS, The Institute for Human Services	Honolulu
Conservation Council for Hawai'i	Honolulu	Iolani Palace	Honolulu
Design Thinking Hawaii	Honolulu	Kailapa Community Association	Kamuela
Ebb & Flow Arts, Inc.	Kula	Kanu Hawaii, Hawaii Alliance for Progressive Action	
Feed Hawaii	Hawi	Kau Rural Health Community Association Inc.	Pahala
First Choice Inspection Group, Inc. d/b/a Free Help Education Organization	Kihei	Kaua'i Planning & Action Alliance	Lihue
First United Methodist Church of Honolulu	Honolulu	Kauai United Way	LIHUE
Friends of the Children's Justice Center of Maui	Wailuku	Klapperich International Training Associates (KITA), LLC	Hawaii
Friends of the Library of Hawaii		Kohola Leo	
Hale Kipa		Kokua Mau	Honolulu
Hanapepe Economic Alliance		Ku'ikahi Mediation Center	Hilo
Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations	Honolulu	Kupu	Kailua
Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice	Honolulu	Lahaina Arts Association	Lahaina
Hawaii Arts Alliance	Honolulu	Lanai Community Health Center	Lanai City
Hawaii Community Foundation	Honolulu	Lanakila Pacific	Honolulu
Hawai'i Council for the Humanities	Honolulu	Laupahoehoe Train Museum	Laupahoehoe
Hawaii Craftsmen	Honolulu	Liljestrand Foundation	Honolulu
Hawaii Forest Industry Association	Ookala	Make-A-Wish Hawaii	
Hawaii Immunization Coalition	Honolulu	Maui Dance Council	Maui
Hawaii Nature Hui	Honolulu	Maui Family YMCA	Kahului
Hawaii Opera Theatre	Honolulu	Maui Nui Botanical Gardens	Kahului
		Maunaloa Fishpond Heritage Center	
		Mental Health Association in Hawaii	Honolulu

Molokai Child Abuse Prevention
 Pathways
 Na Keiki o Emalia Wailuku
 Na Pu'uwai Kaunakakai
 North Kohala Community Resource Hawi
 Center
 Ocean View Community Association, Ocean View
 Inc.
 Pacific Islanders In Communications Honolulu
 PAË»I Foundation Honolulu
 PHOCUSED Honolulu
 Read To Me International Honolulu
 Responsive Caregivers of Hawai'i Honolulu
 TEK Consulting Service Kaneohe
 The Food Basket, Inc. Hilo
 The Outdoor Circle Honolulu
 Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii Honolulu
 Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii
 W. M. Keck Observatory
 Window of Hope Pago Pago
 YMCA of Honolulu Honolulu
 YWCA of Kauai

Annie E. Casey Foundation
 Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
 Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
 Association of American Colleges and
 Universities
 Association of Art Museum Directors
 Association of Direct Response Fundraising
 Counsel
 Association of Fundraising Professionals
 Association of Immunization Managers
 Association of Nature Center Administrators
 Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
 Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
 Baptist Women in Ministry
 Barr Foundation
 BoardSource
 Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun
 Violence
 Camp Fire
 Campion Foundation
 Catholic Charities USA
 Catholic Mobilizing Network
 Center for Health, Environment & Justice
 Center for Inquiry
 Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
 Citizen Schools
 CleanSlateNow
 Commonwealth Fund
 Council on Foundations
 Council for Global Equality
 Dance USA
 Dementia Society, Inc.
 Democracy 21
 Destination & Travel Foundation
 Dietel Partners, LLC
 Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
 Ecology Project International
 Engineering Conferences International
 Feed the Children
 Feeding America
 Food & Water Watch
 Ford Foundation
 Forum of Regional Associations of
 Grantmakers
 Free Press
 Girl Scouts of the USA
 Girls Inc.
 Global Integrity
 Goodwill Industries, International
 Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
 Greater Nonprofits
 GuideStar

National Organizations

Abila
 Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic
 Education, Inc.
 AdoptAClassroom.org
 Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
 American Alliance of Museums
 American Association of Anatomists
 American Association of Physics Teachers
 American Association of Teachers of German
 American Bladder Cancer Society
 American Board of Venous & Lymphatic
 Medicine
 American Brass Chamber Music Association
 American Conference of Academic Deans
 American Heart Association
 American Historical Association
 American Jewish Committee
 American Medical Association Foundation
 American Physiological Society
 American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
 American Red Cross
 Americans for the Arts
 Americans Promoting Study Abroad
 Americans United for Separation of Church
 and State
 Amyloidosis Foundation

Habitat for Humanity International
Harbor Compliance
HawkWatch International
Hindu American Foundation
Histiocytosis Foundation
Horizons National
Human Science Institute
Independent Sector
International Essential Tremor Foundation
International Hearing Dog, Inc.
International Performing Arts for Youth
International Primate Protection League
Issue One
Jessie Ball DuPont Fund
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federations of North America
Leadership USA
League of American Orchestras
League of Women Voters
Leukemia Research Foundation
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk
Arts in Education
Lumina Foundation
Lymphoma Foundation of America
Migraine Research Foundation
Mentors International
Morino Ventures, LLC
National Association of Charitable Gift
Planners
National Association of Health Data
Organizations
National Association of State Boating Law
Administrators (NASBLA)
National Association of Watch and Collectors
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Center for Fire and Life Safety
National Committee for Responsive
Philanthropy
National Council of Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
National Council of Nonprofits
National Dance Education Organization
National Hartford Centers of Gerontological
Nursing Excellence
National Human Services Assembly
National Indian Child Welfare Association
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Organization for Albinism and
Hypopigmentation
National Runaway Safeline
National Safe Place Network
National Tongan American Society
NEO Law Group
North American Bramble Growers Research
Foundation
OPERA America
Partnership for America's Children
Pension Fund of the Christian Church
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement
Project Wet Foundation
Project Managers Without Borders
Public Citizen
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Secular Coalition for America
Senior Executives Association
Seva Foundation
Skillman Foundation
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Smith's Food and Drug
Social Velocity
The Arc of the United States
The Aspen Institute
The Commonwealth Fund
The Dibble Institute
The Educational Foundation of America
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
The Voter Participation Center
TIDES
Unemployment Services Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
United Way Worldwide
University Professional & Continuing
Education Association
US Lacrosse
Vasculitis Foundation
Volunteers of America
Voto Latino
Wallace Global Fund
WasteWater Education
Weingart Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Words Without Borders
World Day of Prayer USA
World Neighbors, Inc.
Youth Services America
YWCA USA