Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship
UPDATED June 1, 2018

The Honorable Andy Barr
1427 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Barr:

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.
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,

Kentucky

Access to Justice Foundation  Lexington
Actors' Playhouse of Georgetown  Georgetown
Actors Theatre of Louisville  Louisville
Americana Community Center, Inc.  Louisville
AOB Consulting  Louisville
Appalachian Horse Center  Lexington
Ashley Rountree and Associates  Louisville
Asia Institute-Crane House bmtconsulting  Frankfort
Boys & Girls Club of Franklin Simpson  Franklin
BUILD  Lexington
CASA  Elizabethtown
CASA of the Heartland  Elizabethtown
Catholic Charities Diocese of Lexington, KY  Lexington
Catholic Diocese of Lexington Center for Nonprofit Excellence  Louisville
Central Kentucky Community Foundation  Elizabethtown
Children's Alliance of Kentucky  Frankfort
Choices, Inc.  Louisville
Christian Appalachian Project Community Action of Southern Kentucky  Paintsville
Community Arts Center, Inc.  Danville
Cumberland Mountain Arts & Crafts Council, Inc.  Jenkins
Cumberland Trails United Way  Middlesboro
Day Spring Community Living Dulca Scenes, Inc.  Louisville
Eastern Area Community Ministries  Louisville
Estill Arts Council, Inc.  Irvine
FairThreads, LLC.  Louisville
Falls City Community BikeWorks  Louisville
Family & Children's Place  Louisville
Food Pantry For Woodford County  Versailles
Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky  Louisville
Friend for Life Cancer Support Network  Louisville
Friends of Hardin County Animal Shelter  Elizabethtown
Fullanthropy  Louisville
Gateway Homeless Coalition  Morehead
GB Facilitation & Training Works  Frankfort
Girl Scouts of Kentucky's Wilderness Road  Lexington
Girls Inc. of Owensboro Daviess County  Elizabethtown
Grace and Mercy  Hopkinsville
Graves County Child Advocacy Program  Mayfield
GreenHouse17  Bowling Green
Habilitation Information Vocation & Education, Inc.  Madisonville
Habitat for Humanity of Hopkins County  Richmond
Habitat for Humanity of Madison & Clark Counties  Louisville
Hand in Hand  Danville
Heart Of KY United Way  Lexington
Henry Clay Memorial Foundation  Louisville
Hershel "Woody" Williams Medal of Honor Foundation  Louisville
Hilliard Lyons Trust Company, LLC  Louisville
Homeless & Housing Coalition of KY  Frankfort
Hosparus Health  Louisville
Independence Place, Inc.  Lexington
Innovation Arts Academy, Inc.  Lexington
International Order of EARS ITNBluegrass  Lexington
Jarrett's Joy Cart, Inc.  Nicholasville
KEENStart  Lexington
Kentuckiana Health Collaborative  Louisville
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship</th>
<th>Kentucky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Academy of Science</td>
<td>Berea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Association of Food Banks</td>
<td>Metro United Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky CancerLink</td>
<td>MG Coaching and Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Center for the Arts</td>
<td>Morehead State University Center for Regional Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Council of Churches</td>
<td>Movement for Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Environmental Foundation</td>
<td>My Purple Friends Epilepsy Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Equal Justice Center for Women</td>
<td>National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Habitat for Humanity, Inc.</td>
<td>National Safe Place Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation</td>
<td>Nazareth Villages Nursing Home Ombudsman Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky Home Care Association</td>
<td>Office for Housing and Community Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky Nonprofit Network</td>
<td>Paris Animal Welfare Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky Primary Care Association, Inc.</td>
<td>Passionist Earth &amp; Spirit Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Psychological Foundation</td>
<td>Pfc. Richard L. Vanover Veterans Village, Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky Railway Museum</td>
<td>SAFY of Louisville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Voices for Health</td>
<td>Presbyterian Homes and Services of Kentucky, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidney Health Alliance of KY For Life</td>
<td>Publishers, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KY Circuit Court Clerks' Trust</td>
<td>Radio Eye Lexington</td>
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<tr>
<td>KyAdapt</td>
<td>SAFY of Louisville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaping Minnow Consulting</td>
<td>Louisville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leslie County Food Pantry</td>
<td>SEAM</td>
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<tr>
<td>LexArts, Inc.</td>
<td>Shelter of Hope, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexington Community Land Trust</td>
<td>Southern Roofing Building &amp; General Contracting, Inc.</td>
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<td>Life Adventure Center</td>
<td>Southwest Community Ministries</td>
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<td>Living Arts &amp; Science Center LOKR</td>
<td>St. Joseph Children's Home</td>
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<td>Lost River Cave</td>
<td>St. Vincent Mission, Inc.</td>
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<td>Louisville Independent Business Alliance</td>
<td>Strive, Inc.</td>
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<td>Summit Christian University Sustainable Business Ventures Corporation</td>
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<td>Making A Difference Now (MADN)</td>
<td>The Luci Center</td>
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<td>Matthew 25 AIDS Services</td>
<td>The Pete Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mattingly Edge</td>
<td>The Shine House, Inc.</td>
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<td>Mayfield-Graves County United Way</td>
<td>UK Markey Cancer Foundation</td>
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<td>Mental Health America of Kentucky</td>
<td>United Way of Franklin County</td>
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<td>Mentoring Plus, Inc.</td>
<td>United Way of Kentucky</td>
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<td>United Way of Mason County</td>
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<td>United Way of Northeast Kentucky</td>
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<td>Ashland</td>
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</tbody>
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United Way of the Bluegrass, Lexington
Ursuline Sisters
Viet Nam Veterans of America, Chapter 1051, Elizabethtown
Warm Blessings Soup Kitchen, Elizabethtown
William D. Clifton, Esq., Women Leading Kentucky, Lexington
Woodford Theatre, Versailles
YouthBuild Louisville, Louisville
Zion UCC Owensboro

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
African Diaspora United, Inc.
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
America Solidaria U.S.
American Alliance of Museums
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of Teachers of German
American Atheists
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
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Anti-Defamation League
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
Celiac Disease Foundation
Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Center for Inquiry
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Citizen Schools
CleanSlateNow
Common Cause
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
Easter Seals
Ecology Project International
Engineering Conferences International
Episcopal Relief & Development
Feed the Children
Feeding America
Fidesco USA
Food & Water Watch
Ford Foundation
Free Press
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Global Integrity
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
Greater Nonprofits
GuideStar
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 Alliance for Law and Social Action
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
Millennium Water Alliance
Mentors International
Morino Ventures, LLC
National 4-H Council
National Alliance of Community Economic Development
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
National Association for Shoplifting Prevention
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Center for Fire and Life Safety
National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
National Council of Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
National Council of Nonprofits
National Council of Tribes
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 Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.
The Commonwealth Fund
The Dibble Institute
The Educational Foundation of America
The George Gund Foundation
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
The Voter Participation Center
TIDES
Unemployment Services Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
United Philanthropy Forum
United Soldiers and Sailors of America
United Way Worldwide
University Professional & Continuing Education Association
US Lacrosse
Vasculitis Foundation
Volunteers in Medicine
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