The Honorable Anthony Brown  
1505 Longworth House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Brown:

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,

Maryland

AAHC, Inc. Silver Spring
Accessible Resources for Independence Glen Burnie
Accounting for Change Annapolis
Alice Ferguson Foundation Accokeek
American Association of Anatomists College Park
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Physiological Society
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc. Bethesda
Annapolis Green Annapolis
Anne Arundel County Volunteer Center
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Arundel Child Care Connections
Asian-American Homeownership Counseling, Inc. Rockville
Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals Baltimore
Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers
Association of Community Services Columbia
Association of Immunization Managers Rockville
Autism FYI Org Bowie
Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc. Baltimore
Baltimore Research BioQUEST
CALMRA, Inc. Beltsville
CASA of the Mid-Shore
Celebrate Frederick, Inc. Frederick
Charles County Charitable Trust
Christine L Manor, CPA Rockville
Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County
Consumer Health First Potomac
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) - Prince George's County Riverdale
Crossroads Community, Inc. Centreville
Deaf Independent Living Association, Inc. Salisbury
Disability Rights Maryland Baltimore
Electric Vehicle Association of Greater Washington, DC Jefferson
Elijah's Blessing Community Service Center Baltimore
Farr Commercial Annapolis
Federated Charities Corporation of Frederick Frederick
First & St. Stephen's United Church of Christ Baltimore
Frederick County 4-H Camp & Activities Center, Inc. Frederick
Fundraising Consulting Baltimore
Girl Scouts of Central Maryland Baltimore
Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay Salisbury
Glorystar Children's Chorus Rockville
Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville
Hanberry Associates, LLC Frederick
Handicap International Silver Spring
Harbel Community Organization, Inc. Baltimore
Healthy Howard, Inc. Laurel
Heritage Housing Partners Corporation Columbia
Hero Dogs, Inc. Clarksville
Historic Sotterley, Inc. Hollywood
Holton-Arms School Bethesda
HopeWorks of Howard County Columbia
Human Resource Learning Center
Humanim
Inspiring Change Mental Health Services Baltimore
Intersection of Change Baltimore
It Takes Two, Inc. Crofton
Jesus for All Evangelistic Ministry, Inc.  Gaithersburg
Ladies Auxiliary of the Ocean City Volunteer Fire Co. Ocean City
Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services, Inc. Laurel
Laurel-Beltsville Oasis, Inc. Laurel
Leaders of Tomorrow Youth Center, Inc. Laurel
Lighthouse - Youth and Family Services Catonsville
Linda Felder House of Etiquette, Inc. Baltimore
Living In Recovery Columbia
Marc Breslaw & Associates LLC Columbia
Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus Greenbelt
Maryland CASH Campaign Maryland
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault Baltimore
Maryland Humanities Baltimore
Maryland Nonprofits Baltimore
Meier and Associates Frederick
Mental Health Association of Frederick County Frederick
Metro Maryland Ostomy Association Rockville
Miracle Ministry Rockville
Mission of Love Charities, Inc. Capitol Heights
Montgomery County Agricultural Center, Inc. Gaithersburg
(Montgomery County Fair) Baltimore
Moveable Feast, Inc. Chevy Chase
National 4-H Council Perryville
National Dance Education Organization Rockville
Networks of Change Adamstown
Nonprofit Village Hunt Valley
One Bright Bird Consulting, LLC Baltimore
Pathfinders for Autism Olney
Paul's Place Baltimore
Payroll Network Queenstown
Project Change Towson
Public Justice Center
Rebuilding Together
Redstart Creative S.A.F.E. - Supplying Allergy Friendly and Emergency Food Pantry Columbia
Service Coordination, Inc. Frederick
Shepherds of Zion Ministries International Church Silver Spring
Side by Side Laurel
SONA Consulting, Inc. Baltimore
Strong City Baltimore
Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority, Inc. Takoma Park
The Arc Baltimore Baltimore
The Arc Maryland
The Bainum Family Foundation Bethesda
The Nora Roberts Foundation Silver Spring
The Sheridan Group
The Sober Truth Substance Abuse Treatment Westminster
The Village In Howard, Inc. Columbia
Total Care Services, Inc. Lanham
Tri-County Youth Services Bureau Waldorf
United Ministries, Inc. Baltimore
United Way of Frederick County Frederick
United Way of Washington County, MD Hagerstown
US Lacrosse
Vega Mala Consulting Rockville
V-LINC Baltimore
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc. Lanham
White Rose Farm Circle, Inc. Taneytown

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
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
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
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
Mentors International
Morino Ventures, LLC
National 4-H Council
National Alliance of Community Economic Development