

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Brenda Lawrence
1213 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lawrence:

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,

Michigan			
Accelerate UP	Marquette	Community Action of Allegan County	Allegan
Accounting Aid Society	Detroit	Community Economic Development Assoc. of MI (CEDAM)	Lansing
Adaptive Alternatives LLC	Ann Arbor	Community Foundation For Northeast Michigan	Alpena
Adult Handicap Program	Charlotte	Community Foundation of St. Clair County	Port Huron
Air Zoo	Portage	Community Social Services of Wayne County	Detroit
All About Women's Health Boutique		Council of Michigan Foundations	Grand Haven
Amyloidosis Foundation		Creating Hope International	Dearborn
Arts Council of Greater Lansing	Lansing	Crim Fitness Foundation	Flint
Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote - Michigan	Detroit	Crooked Tree Arts Center	Petoskey
ASPPiRE of Mid-Michigan	Lansing	Cross Movement Social Justice, L3C	
Barry Community Foundation	Hastings	Cultivate Community	Ypsilanti
Bay-Lakes Council, Boy Scouts of America		Curtis Baptist Church	Curtis
Bettye Harris Larynx Cancer Awareness Center	Oak Park	Cutaneous Lymphoma Foundation	Birmingham
Blue Water Community Action	Port Huron	Defeat MSA	Detroit
Branch County Community Foundation	Coldwater	Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation	Detroit
Brass Band of Battle Creek	Battle Creek	Disability Network Oakland & Macomb	Southfield
Cadillac Area YMCA	Cadillac	Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy	Grand Rapids
Calumet Theatre Co.	Calumet	Downriver Marriage Resource Center	Romulus
Canton Community Foundation	Canton	E.U.P. Community Dispute Resolution Center	
Capital Region Community Foundation	Lansing	Eastern Michigan Christian Foundation	Lexington
Changing Lives And Staying Sober (CLASS)		Ecumenical Center & International Residence (ECIR)	Ann Arbor
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation	Flint	EDccelerated Solutions LLC	Berkley
Cherry Health Foundation	Grand Rapids	Eden Lutheran Church	Munising
Child & Family Services of Northeast Michigan	Alpena	Extended Grace	Grand Haven
Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan		Family Promise of the Lakeshore	Muskegon
Christian Schools International	Grand Rapids	Feeding America West Michigan	Comstock Park
Common Ground	Bloomfield	Fetzer Institute	Kalamazoo
Communities First, Inc.			
Community Action House	Holland		

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Flint Youth Film Festival	Flint	Kalamazoo Community Foundation	Kalamazoo
Food Bank of South Central Michigan	Battle Creek	Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes, Kalamazoo County	
Forgotten Harvest	Oak Park	Hunger-Free Community Coalition	Kalamazoo
Freedom Road Transportation Authority	Orion	Kids Repair Program	Lansing
Fremont Area Community Foundation	Fremont	Kirtland Community College Foundation	Roscommon
Friends of Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, Inc.	Ontonagon	Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy	Sault Ste Marie
Friends of the Braumart Golden Lotus, Inc. d/b/a	Iron Mountain	Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity	Holland
Serving as Song of the Morning Yoga Retreat Center	Vanderbilt	Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance	Holland
Grand Rapids Community Foundation	Grand Rapids	LaMoreaux Family Foundation	Lansing
Grand Rapids Creative Youth Center		Legal Assistance Center	Grand Rapids
Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy	Traverse City	Leslie Science & Nature Center	Ann Arbor
Great Lakes Center for Youth Development	Marquette	Livingston County Habitat for Humanity, Inc.	Brighton
Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay	Traverse City	Love In the Name of Christ SE Ottawa County	Hudsonville
Habitat for Humanity Northeast Michigan	Alpena	Lymphoma Foundation of America	
Habitat for Humanity of Michigan	Lansing	M&M Area Community Foundation	Menominee
Habitat for Humanity Van Buren County	Bangor	Manresa	
Haiti Nursing Foundation	Ann Arbor	MARO	
Hamtramck Community Initiative		Martin Area Resource Center	
Hand2Hand		Ma's House	Detroit
Harbor Humane Society	West Olive	McGregor Fund	Detroit
Haven of Rest Ministries	Battle Creek	Michigan Association of Planning	Ann Arbor
Hillman Community Radio	Hillman	Michigan Dental Association Foundation	
Hope-Central	Lansing	Michigan Historic Preservation Network	
Housing Resources, Inc.	Kalamazoo	Michigan League for Public Policy	Lansing
Huron River Citizens Association		Michigan Nonprofit Association	
Impact 100 Global Advisory Council	Traverse City	Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion	
Iosco County Coats for Kids	East Tawas	Michigan Science Center	Detroit
Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association	Houghton	Michigan Transportation Connection	East Lansing
Jail and Outreach Ministry	Lake Orion	Midland Area Community Foundation	Midland
Joy-Southfield Community Development Corporation	Detroit	Mid-Michigan Industries	Mt. Pleasant

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MNA Southeastern Michigan Public Policy Council	Detroit	St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center	Detroit
MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership	Detroit	Starr Commonwealth StarrVista	Detroit
MSA Shoe	Saint Clair Shores	Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice	Detroit
Nanette Pearson CPA, CGMA, CAE		Superior String Alliance	Marquette
New Perspectives Group		The Arc Michigan	Lansing
North Country Trail Association	Lowell	The Community Choice Foundation	Farmington Hills
Northern Care Center	Cheboygan	The Cooperation Group	Highland Park
Ozone House Youth & Family Services	Ann Arbor	The Detroit Institute of Arts	
Peninsula Arts Appreciation Council	Negaunee	The First Tee of Northern Michigan	Harbor Springs
Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation	Petoskey	The Goodwin Co.	Royal Oak
PPG Interactive Corp.	Ann Arbor	The Great Lakes Children's Museum	Traverse City
Principia, LLC	Detroit	The Harry A and Margaret D Towsley Foundation	Ann Arbor
Quincy Mine Hoist Association		The Heat and Warmth Fund	Detroit
R. E. Olds Foundation	East Lansing	The Henry Ford	Dearborn
Radio First	Port Huron	The Leelanau School	Glen Arbor
Rainmaking For Good	Wixom	The Skillman Foundation	Detroit
Real People Media		The Women's Center of Southeastern Michigan	Ann Arbor
Recovery Institute of Southwest Michigan	Kalamazoo	The YES Foundation	Bingham Farms
reQuest-Ed Learning Institute	Troy	The Center for Women in Transition	Holland
Resolution Services Center	Lansing	Therapeutic Riding, Inc.	Ann Arbor
Rochester Area Neighborhood House	Rochester	Thornapple Arts Council	Hastings
Rogue River Watershed Partners	Rockford	Thunder Bay Folk Society	Alpena
Rotary Charities of Traverse City	Traverse City	Thunder Bay River Center, Inc.	Alpena
Ruth Ellis Center	Detroit	TIRF - The International Research Foundation for English Language Education	Traverse City
Ruth Mott Foundation	Flint	Tolfree Foundation	West Branch
Schoolcraft County Economic Development Corporation	Manistique	Transportation Riders United (TRU)	Detroit
South Bay Alpena	Alpena	TriCities Historical Museum	Grand Haven
Southside Community Coalition	Lansing	TrueNorth Community Services	Fremont
Southwest Solutions	Detroit	United Way of Manistee County	Manistee
Special Ministries of Livingston County	Brighton	Upper Great Lakes Family Health Center	Houghton
Spectrum Health	Hastings	Voices for Earth Justice	Detroit
St. Clair County Community Mental Health	St. Clair	Washtenaw Literacy	Ypsilanti

William Bonifas Arts Center Escanaba
Women's Center of Greater
 Lansing Lansing
Woodside Vision Foundation Troy
YWCA West Central
 Michigan Grand Rapids

Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Baptist Women in Ministry
Barr Foundation
BoardSource
Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun
 Violence

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

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
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 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