The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
506 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Shaheen:

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,

New Hampshire

Academy of Applied Science
Affordable Housing Education and Development (AHEAD), Inc.
AIDS Response Seacoast
Alan Cantor Consulting LLC
Americans United Upper Valley VT-NH Chapter
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Arts Consulting Group
Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
Bhutanese Community of New Hampshire
Bike-Walk Alliance of NH
Birch Corner Associates
Carsey School of Public Policy
Castle Preservation Society Center for New Beginnings
City Arts Nashua
Community Toolbox, Inc.
Concord Coalition to End Homelessness
Concord Community Music School
Cornerstone Visiting Nurse Agency
Cornerstone VNA
Cross Roads House, Inc.
CVNA
Dover Adult Learning Center
Eastern Lakes Region Housing Coalition
ELRHC
First Church in Jaffrey
Franklin Opera House
Franklin VNA & Hospice
Freedom Historical Society
Friends of Tuckerman Ravine
Grafton County Senior Citizens Council, Inc.
Great Bay Services
Hampstead Stage Company
Holt Elwell Memorial Foundation / Camp Mowgli
Jeanine & Company
Joan G. Lovering Health Center
Keene Day Care Center
Keene Housing Kids Collaborative
Laconia Historical and Museum Society
Lake Sunapee Protective Association
Lakes Region Mental Health Center, Inc. d/b/a Genesis Behavioral Health
Lee Bruder Associates
Loon Preservation Committee
Marguerite's Place, Inc.
Marion Gerrish Community Center
Monadnock Conservancy
Monadnock Humane Society
Monadnock Worksource
Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter, Inc.
New Beginnings Without Violence and Abuse
New England Pet Partners, Inc.
New Hampshire Art Association
New Hampshire Boat Museum
New Hampshire Community Action Association
New Hampshire Humanities
Lebanon
Dover
Hebron
Greenland
Keene
Laconia
Sunapee
Laconia
Hancock
Nashua
Derry
Keene
Swanzy
Peterborough
Nashua
Laconia
Durham
New Hampshire School Administrators
New Hampshire Theatre Project
NH Businesses for Social Responsibility
NH Center for Nonprofits
NH Citizens for Criminal Justice Reform
NH Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
NH Community Loan Fund
NH Preservation Alliance
NHSCOT
Raymond Coalition for Youth, Inc.
SEH Studios
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
Southeastern NH Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services
Squam Lakes Natural Science Center
St. Joseph Community Services, Inc.
The Birchtree Center
The Community Kitchen, Inc.
The Fells Historic Estate and Gardens
Touchstone Farm
Trower & Trower, Inc.
Upper Valley Land Trust
Visiting Nurse Home Care and Hospice of Carroll County
White Birch Center
World Affairs Council of New Hampshire

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

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
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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
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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