The Honorable Dwight Evans
1105 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Evans:

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,

Pennsylvania

A Woman's Concern
ACLAMO Family Centers
Acquired Brain Injury Network of Pennsylvania
AFP-Greater Philadelphia Chapter
Allegheny County Library Association
American Insight
Army Heritage Center Foundation
Auberle
Aurora Philanthropic Consulting, LLC
Balanced Heart Healing Center, Inc.
Beacon Clinic for Health and Hope
Berks Community Action Program, Inc.
Berks County Community Foundation
Beyond Celiac
Bower & Co.
Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center
Breast Cancer Support Services of Berks
Brother's Brother Foundation
Bucks County Housing Group
Butler YWCA
Caitlin's Smiles
Calvary United Methodist Church of Windber PA
Camp Koala
Casita Copan
Center for Literacy, World Affairs Council
Central Pennsylvania Food Bank
Centre County Women's Resource Center
Lancaster
Norristown
Lansdale
Lansdale
Philadelphia
Philadelphia
Carlisle
McKeesport
King of Prussia
Mars
Harrisburg
Reading
Reading
Allentown
West Reading
Pittsburgh
Ivyland
Butler
Windber
Kingston
Pittsburgh
Philadelphia
State College

Centre Wildlife Care
Chester County Historical Society
Christian Youth Fellowship, Inc.
Civic Square
Colcom Foundation
COMMON Education Foundation
Commonwealth Youth Choirs
Communities In Schools of the Lehigh Valley
Coro Pittsburgh
Cotlar and Cotlar
Dementia Society, Inc.
DePaul School for Hearing and Speech
Development Consultants
Dignity Housing
Diversity in Action
Donald and Sylvia Robinson Family Foundation
Don't Stop Dreamin'
Downtown Lewistown, Inc.
Elsie Howard & Associates Employment Opportunity and Training Center of Northeast Pennsylvania
Energize, Inc.
Family Promise of Lyco County

West Chester
Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh
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Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh
Philadelphia
Scranton
Philadelphia
Williamsport
Wilkes-Barre
West Chester
Pittsburgh
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Philadelphia
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Philly Fellows
Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens
Phoenixville Area Community Services
Pinebrook Family Answers
Pleasantville United Church of Christ
Plum Senior Community Center
Praise Consulting
Recycle Bicycle Harrisburg
Renew Theaters, Inc.
Richard Erstad Consulting
Robert Johnson Smith Family Life Center
Roots Tribe Yoga
Rosenlund Family Foundation
Samara: Nurture and Education for Parents
Schuylkill Women in Crisis
SeeChange Consulting
Sexual Assault Resource & Counseling Center (SARCC)
Sisters of Mercy
Society of the Holy Child Jesus, American Province
SpiriTrust Lutheran Home Care & Hospice
Starfinder Foundation
Strategy Solutions
Tabor Community Services
TeamChildren
The Alfred & Mary Douty Foundation
The Bodhana Group
The Burd Group
The Children's Museum
The Conococheague Institute for the Study of Cultural Heritage
The Dietrich W. Botstiber Foundation
Perkasie
Harrisburg
State College
Ulysses
Philadelphia
Pittsburgh
Phoenixville
Allentown
Chalfont
Plum
Langhorne
Carlisle
Doylestown
Ardmore
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Elizabethtown
Pottstown
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Pittsburgh
Chambersburg
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Erie
Lancaster
Audubon
Philadelphia
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Bloomsburg
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The Florencia M Mack Educational Fund
The HBE Foundation
The Lectionary Company
The Luzerne Foundation
The Merchants Fund
The University of the Arts
The Untours Foundation
Tick Tock Early Learning Center
Transitions of PA
TriCounty Active Adult Center
Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living
United Way of Adams County
United Way of Beaver County
United Way of Blair County
United Way of Butler County
United Way of Erie County
United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties
United Way of Lancaster County
United Way of Mifflin-Juniata
United Way of Pennsylvania
United Way of York County, PA
Valerie M. Jones Associates
Waverly Community House
Women Against Abuse
Women for Sobriety
Women's Resource Center
Women's Way
York Day Nursery
YWCA Bradford
YWCA Greater Pittsburgh
YWCA Northcentral PA
YWCA Tri-County Area
YWCA York

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
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National Association of Health Data Organizations
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NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
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TIDES
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Words Without Borders
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World Neighbors, Inc.
Youth Services America
YWCA USA