

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Jim McGovern
438 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative McGovern:

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.

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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,

Massachusetts Organizations			
		Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation	Norwell
A Direct Solution	Marstons Mills	Citizen Schools	Boston
African Community Education Program	Worcester	City Mission	Boston
Agassiz Baldwin Community	Cambridge	CLASS, Inc.	
American Bladder Cancer Society	Dalton	Coalition for Responsible Home Education	Canton
American Lung Association - Massachusetts	Springfield	College Light Opera Company	
Anne Butterfield Company		Communities for People	Boston
Asperger Works, Inc.	Lawrence	Community Foundation for Nantucket	Nantucket
Associated Grant Makers	Boston	Community Foundation of SE MA	
Barr Foundation	Boston	Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts	
Bay Cove Human Services	Boston	Community Health Center of Cape Cod	
Bay Path University		Community Servings	Jamaica Plain
Bedford Youth & Family Services	Bedford	Congregation Beth Israel of the Merrimack Valley	North Andover
Berkshire AHEC		Convergence Ensemble	Boston
Berkshire County Arc		Cotuit Center for the Arts	Cotuit
Bethany Hill Place, Inc.	Framingham	Disability Rights Advocacy Fund	Boston
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass/Metrowest		Domus Incorporated	Westfield
Big Sister Association of Greater Boston	Boston	Dream Day on Cape Cod	Brewster
BioBuilder Educational Foundation	Newton	Edward Street Child Services	Worcester
Boston Building Materials Co-op Charitable and Educational Fund	Roxbury	Energy Consumers Alliance of New England, Inc.	Boston
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center	Boston	Environmental League of Massachusetts	
Boston Harbor Now	Boston	ESC of New England	Boston
Boston Partners in Education	Boston	Fairwinds-Nantucket's Counseling Center	Nantucket
Bostonian	Jamaica Plain	Flint Neighborhood Association	Fall River
Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston	Boston	Flying Cloud Institute	Great Barrington
Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston, Jordan Clubhouse	Chelsea	For Kids Only Afterschool	Salem
Brockton Area Workforce Investment Board	Brockton	Franklin County Community Development Corporation	Greenfield
Cambridge Historical Society	Cambridge	Friends of the Public Garden	Boston
Cape Abilities	Hyannis	Generation Teach Inc.	
Cape Cod Child Development Center for Social Policy	N. Quincy	GMA Foundations	Boston
Cerebral Palsy of Massachusetts, Inc.	Stoughton	Greater Worcester Community Foundation	Worcester
Chatham Marconi Maritime Center	North Chatham	Growth River, LLC	Lee
Child & Family Services	Hyannis	Hawkeye Campership Fund, Inc.	West Newton
Children Across America	Milford		

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Massachusetts

Health Resources in Action	Boston	North Shore CDC	Salem
Helping Hands: Monkey Helpers for the Disabled		Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity	North Adams
Hitchcock Free Academy	Brimfield	Northfield Council on Aging	Northfield
Housing Nantucket (Affordable Housing Non-Profit)	Nantucket	Nurtury, Inc.	Boston
Inward Bound Mindfulness Education		On Common Ground, Inc.	Attleboro
Jewish Family & Child Services	Waltham	Our Neighbors' Table	Amesbury
John E Boyd Center for Child Care & Development		Paul & Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation	
Junior League of Boston	Boston	Paul Katz Consulting	
K. Weill Consulting Group, LLC	Brookline	Pilgrims First Landing Park	Provincetown
Kathy Eckles & Co., LLC	Gloucester	Pleasant Bay Community Boating Proposals, Etc.	Medway
Keganin No Senshi Aikido	Holyoke	Providers' Council	Boston
Kenneth Mason Waugh Nonprofit, Inc.		Puppet Showplace Theater	
L'Arche Boston North	Haverhill	Rebuilding Together Greater Haverhill, Inc.	Haverhill
Lawrence CommunityWorks, Inc.	Lawrence	Reflection Films	Arlington
Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly	Boston	Resources of Human Development	Lynn
Lovelane Special Needs Horseback Riding Program	Lincoln	Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy	Boston
Lowell Telecommunications Corp. MAMH	Lowell	Roxbury Youthworks Inc.	Roxbury Crossing
Mass Audubon	Boston	Scleroderma Foundation New England	Topsfield
Mass Audubon's Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary	Barnstable	Self-Reliance	North Falmouth
Massachusetts Advocates for Children	Boston	Silver Lining Mentoring	Boston
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions	Belmont	SJAssociates	Randolph
Massachusetts Nonprofit Network	Boston	Step Up International	Arlington
Medway Community Farm, Inc.	Medway	Summer Ink	
Melissa Gilroy, CPA		Susan St. Pierre Consulting Services	Salem
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership	Boston	Tapestry Health	Florence
Merck Family Fund		The Cape Cod Foundation	Yarmouthport
Metropolitan Waterworks Museum	Chestnut Hill	The Green Streets Initiative	Harvard
MetroWest Nonprofit Network	Framingham	The Open Pantry of Greater Lowell	Lowell
MetroWest Visitors Bureau	Framingham	The Progeria Research Foundation	Peabody
NAMI Cape Cod	Hyannis	The Sudbury Foundation	Sudbury
Nantucket Interfaith Council	Nantucket	The Trustees of Reservations	Boston
Neighborhood Falmouth, Inc.	Falmouth	The United Arc, Inc.	Turners Falls
Neponset River Watershed Association	Canton	Third Sector New England	Boston
New Communities Services, Inc.	Cambridge	Vinfen	Cambridge
New England Museum Association	Arlington	Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires, Inc.	Great Barrington
Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires	Great Barrington	Wayside Youth & Family Support Network	Framingham
North Shore Alliance of LGBTQ Youth	Salem	WE CAN	Harwich Port
		Western Massachusetts Training Consortium	Holyoke
		Winchester After School Programs d/b/a Kids' Corner	Winchester
		WORK, Inc.	Dorchester

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
American Alliance of Museums
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of Teachers of German
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
Annie E. Casey Foundation
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
Ecology Project International
Engineering Conferences International
Feed the Children
Feeding America
Food & Water Watch
Ford Foundation
Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
Free Press
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Global Integrity
Goodwill Industries, International
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 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 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
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Center for Fire and Life Safety
National Committee for Responsive
Philanthropy
National Council of Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
National Council of Nonprofits
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 Commonwealth Fund
The Dibble Institute
The Educational Foundation of America
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
The Voter Participation Center
TIDES
Unemployment Services Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
United Way Worldwide
University Professional & Continuing
Education Association
US Lacrosse
Vasculitis Foundation
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