The Honorable Bill Keating
2351 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Keating:

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,

Massachusetts

A Direct Solution Marstons Mills
African Community Education Program Worcester
Agassiz Baldwin Community Cambridge
American Bladder Cancer Society Dalton
American Lung Association - Springfield
Massachusetts
Anne Butterfield Company Lawrence
Asperger Works, Inc. Boston
Associated Grant Makers Boston
Authentic Caribbean Foundation Inc. Boston
Barr Foundation Boston
Bay Cove Human Services Boston
Bay Path University Bedford
Bedford Youth & Family Services Bedford
Berkshire AHEC Framingham
Berkshire County Arc
Bethany Hill Place, Inc. Boston
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Mass / MetroWest Boston
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay Boston
Big Sister Association of Greater Boston Boston
BioBuilder Educational Foundation Newton
Boston Building Materials Co-op Charitable and Educational Fund Roxbury
Boston Chinatown Boston
Boston Education, Skills and Training Corp. Medford
Boston Harbor Now Boston
Boston Partners in Education Boston
Bostonian Jamaica Plain
Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston Boston
Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston, Jordan Clubhouse Chelsea
Broad Cove Chorale / Unicorn Singers Brockton
Brockton Area Workforce Investment Board Brockton
Cambridge Historical Society Cambridge
Cape Abilities Hyannis
Cape Cod Child Development Center for Social Policy North Quincy
Center for Teen Empowerment, Inc. Boston
Cerebral Palsy of Massachusetts, Inc. Stoughton
Chatham Marconi Maritime Center North Chatham
Child & Family Services Hyannis
Children Across America Milford
Children's Friend, Inc. Worcester
Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation Norwell
Citizen Schools Boston
City Mission Boston
CLASS, Inc. Canton
Coalition for Responsible Home Education
College Light Opera Company Boston
Communities for People Nantucket
Community Foundation for Nantucket
Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts New Bedford
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
Community Health Center of Cape Cod
Community Servings Jamaica Plain
Congregation Beth Israel of the Merrimack Valley North Andover
Convergence Ensemble Boston
Cotuit Center for the Arts Cotuit
Disability Rights Advocacy Fund Boston
Domus Incorporated Westfield
Dream Day on Cape Cod Brewster
Edward Street Child Services Worcester
Energy Consumers Alliance of New England, Inc. Boston
Environmental League of Massachusetts
ESC of New England
Fairwinds - Nantucket's Counseling Center
Fidelity House Human Services
Flint Neighborhood Association
Flying Cloud Institute
For Kids Only Afterschool
Franklin County Community Development Corporation
Friends of the Public Garden
FSG
Generation Teach, Inc.
GMA Foundations
Greater Worcester Community Foundation
Growth River, LLC
Hawkeye Campership Fund, Inc.
Health Care Without Walls
Health Resources in Action
Helping Hands: Monkey Helpers for the Disabled
Hitchcock Free Academy
Housing Nantucket (Affordable Housing Non-Profit)
Interim Executive Solutions
Inward Bound Mindfulness Education
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Family & Child Services
John E Boyd Center for Child Care & Development
Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts
Junior League of Boston
K. Weill Consulting Group, LLC
Kathy Eckles & Co., LLC
Keganin No Senshi Aikido
Kenneth Mason Waugh Nonprofit, Inc.
L'Arche Boston North Lawrence CommunityWorks, Inc.
LifePath, Inc.
Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly
Lovelane Special Needs Horseback Riding Program
Lowell Telecommunications Corp.
Lower Cape Communications Lutheran's Restoring Creation
MAMH
Mass Audubon
Mass Audubon's Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary
Massachusetts Advocates for Children
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions
Massachusetts Nonprofit Network
MassEquality Education Fund Medway Community Farm, Inc.
Melissa Gilroy, CPA
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
Merck Family Fund
Metropolitan Waterworks Museum
MetroWest Nonprofit Network
MetroWest Visitors Bureau
NAMI Cape Cod
Nantucket Interfaith Council Neighborhood Falmouth, Inc.
Neponset River Watershed Association
New Communities Services, Inc.
New England Museum Association
Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires
Nonprofit VOTE
North Shore Alliance of LGBTQ Youth
North Shore CDC
Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity
Northfield Council on Aging Nurtury, Inc.
OLLIE
Greenfield
Boston
Lincoln
Lowell
Provincetown
Braintree
Boston
Barnstable
Boston
Belmont
Boston
Boston
Burlington
Boston
Medway
Boston
Chestnut Hill
Framingham
Hyannis
Nantucket
Falmouth
Canton
Cambridge
Arlington
Great Barrington
Cambridge
Salem
Salem
North Adams
Northfield
Boston
Manchester
Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

On Common Ground, Inc. Attleboro Third Sector New England Boston
Our Neighbors' Table Amesbury This Star Won't Go Out Quincy
Outer Voices Needham Vinfen Cambridge
Parent Talk Needham Volunteers in Medicine Great Barrington
Paul & Phyllis Fireman Boston Wayside Youth & Family Support Network Framingham
Paul Katz Consulting Provincetown WE CAN Harwich Port
Pilgrims First Landing Park Haverhill World Ocean School Boston
Pine Street Inn Boston Western Massachusetts Training Consortium Holyoke
Pleasant Bay Community Boating Boston Winchester After School Winchester
Proposals, Etc. Medway Programs d/b/a Kids' Corner
Providers' Council Boston
Puppet Showplace Theater Haverhill
Rebuilding Together Greater Haverhill, Inc.
Reflection Films Arlington
Resources of Human Development Lynn
Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy Boston
Roxbury Youthworks, Inc. Roxbury Crossing
Samaritans Boston
Sandwich Food Pantry, Inc. Sandwich Topsfield
Scleroderma Foundation New England North Falmouth
Self-Reliance
Shelter Music Boston
Silver Lining Mentoring Boston
SJ Associates Randolph
Soccer Without Borders Arlington
Step Up International Brookline
Summer Ink
Susan F Schiro and Peter J Manus Foundation Salem
Susan St. Pierre Consulting Services
Tapestry Health Florence
The Cape Cod Foundation Yarmouthport
The Center for Effective Philanthropy Cambridge
The Green Streets Initiative Harvard
The Open Pantry of Greater Lowell Lowell
The Progeria Research Foundation Peabody
The Second Half Lifelong Learning Institute, Inc. Fall River
The Sudbury Foundation Sudbury
The Trustees of Reservations Boston
The United Arc, Inc. Turners Falls

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
African Diaspora United, Inc.
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
Celiac Disease Foundation
Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Center for Inquiry
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Citizen Schools
CleanSlateNow
Common Cause
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
Millennium Water Alliance
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 for Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

Massachusetts

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National Council of Nonprofits  University Professional & Continuing Education Association
National Council of Tribes  US Lacrosse
National Dance Education Organization  Vasculitis Foundation
National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence  Volunteers in Medicine
National Human Services Assembly  Volunteers of America
National Indian Child Welfare Association  Voto Latino
National LGBTQ Task Force  Wallace Global Fund
National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation  WasteWater Education
National Runaway Safeline  Weingart Foundation
National Safe Place Network  William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
National Tongan American Society  Words Without Borders
NEO Law Group  World Day of Prayer USA
North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation  World Neighbors, Inc.
OPERA America  Youth Services America
Partnership for America’s Children  YWCA USA
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 Soldiers and Sailors of America
United Way Worldwide