

Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cummings:

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,

Maryland Organizations			
		Frederick County 4-H Camp & Activities Center, Inc.	Frederick
Alice Ferguson Foundation	Accokeek	Fundraising Consulting	Baltimore
American Association of Anatomists		Girl Scouts of Central Maryland	Baltimore
American Association of Physics Teachers	College Park	Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay	Salisbury
American Physiological Society		Glorystar Children's Chorus	
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.	Bethesda	Goodwill Industries International, Inc.	Rockville
Annapolis Green	Annapolis	Hanberry Associates, LLC	Frederick
Anne Arundel County Volunteer Center	Annapolis	Harbel Community Organization, Inc.	Baltimore
Annie E. Casey Foundation	Baltimore	Healthy Howard, Inc.	Laurel
Asian-American Homeownership Counseling, Inc.	Rockville	Heritage Housing Partners Corporation	Columbia
Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals	Baltimore	Hero Dogs, Inc.	Clarksville
Association of Community Services	Columbia	Historic Sotterley, Inc.	Hollywood
Association of Immunization Managers	Rockville	Holton-Arms School	Bethesda
Autism FYI Org	Bowie	HopeWorks of Howard County	Columbia
Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.	Baltimore	Human Resource Learning Center	
Baltimore Research	Baltimore	Humanim	Columbia
BioQUEST		Inspiring Change Mental Health Services	Baltimore
CALMRA, Inc.	Beltsville	Intersection of Change	Baltimore
CASA of the Mid-Shore		Ladies Auxiliary of the Ocean City Volunteer Fire Co.	Ocean City
Charles County Charitable Trust	La Plata	Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services, Inc.	Laurel
Christine L Manor, CPA	Rockville	Laurel-Beltsville Oasis, Inc.	Laurel
Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County	Annapolis	Leaders of Tomorrow Youth Center, Inc.	
Consumer Health First	Potomac	Lighthouse - Youth and Family Services	Catonsville
Crossroads Community, Inc.	Centreville	Linda Felder House of Etiquette, Inc.	Baltimore
Deaf Independent Living Association, Inc.	Salisbury	Living In Recovery	Columbia
Disability Rights Maryland	Baltimore	Marc Breslaw & Associates LLC	
Electric Vehicle Association of Greater Washington, DC	Jefferson	Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus	Greenbelt
Elijah's Blessing Community Service Center	Baltimore	Maryland CASH Campaign	
Farr Commercial	Annapolis	Maryland Humanities	Baltimore
Federated Charities Corporation of Frederick	Frederick	Maryland Nonprofits	Baltimore
Frederick		Meier and Associates	
First & St. Stephen's United Church of Christ	Baltimore	Mental Health Association of Frederick County	Frederick

Metro Maryland Ostomy Association	Rockville	Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Miracle Ministry	Rockville	Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
Mission of Love Charities, Inc.	Capitol Heights	American Alliance of Museums
Montgomery County Agricultural Center Inc. (Montgomery County Fair)	Gaithersburg	American Association of Anatomists
Moveable Feast, Inc.	Baltimore	American Association of Physics Teachers
National Dance Education Organization		American Association of Teachers of German
Networks of Change	Perryville	American Bladder Cancer Society
Nonprofit Village	Rockville	American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
Paul's Place	Baltimore	American Brass Chamber Music Association
Payroll Network	Baltimore	American Conference of Academic Deans
Project Change	Olney	American Heart Association
Rebuilding Together	Queenstown	American Historical Association
Redstart Creative	Towson	American Jewish Committee
Redtop FC, Inc.		American Medical Association Foundation
S.A.F.E. - Supplying Allergy Friendly and Emergency - Food Pantry	Columbia	American Physiological Society
Service Coordination, Inc.	Frederick	American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
Shepherds of Zion Ministries International Church	Silver Spring	American Red Cross
Side by Side	Laurel	Americans for the Arts
SONA Consulting, Inc.	Baltimore	Americans Promoting Study Abroad
Strong City Baltimore	Baltimore	Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority, Inc.	Takoma Park	Amyloidosis Foundation
The Arc Baltimore	Baltimore	Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Arc Maryland		Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
The Bainum Family Foundation	Bethesda	Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
The Sheridan Group	Silver Spring	Association of American Colleges and Universities
The Sober Truth Substance Abuse Treatment	Westminster	Association of Art Museum Directors
The Village In Howard, Inc.	Columbia	Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
Total Care Services, Inc.	Lanham	Association of Fundraising Professionals
Tri-County Youth Services Bureau	Waldorf	Association of Immunization Managers
United Way of Frederick County	Frederick	Association of Nature Center Administrators
United Way of Washington County, MD	Hagerstown	Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
US Lacrosse		Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Vega Mala Consulting	Rockville	Baptist Women in Ministry
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc.	Lanham	Barr Foundation
White Rose Farm Circle, Inc.	Taneytown	BoardSource

National Organizations

Abila		Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.		Camp Fire
AdoptAClassroom.org		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

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Maryland

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