

# Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship

April 5, 2017

The Honorable Dan Kildee  
227 Cannon House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kildee:

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,

<b>Michigan Organizations</b>			
		Disability Network Oakland & Macomb	Southfield
Accelerate UP	Marquette	Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy	Grand Rapids
Accounting Aid Society	Detroit	Downriver Marriage Resource Center	Romulus
Adaptive Alternatives LLC	Ann Arbor	E.U.P. Community Dispute Resolution Center	
Air Zoo	Portage	EDccelerated Solutions LLC	Berkley
All About Women's Health Boutique		Eden Lutheran Church	Munising
Amyloidosis Foundation		Extended Grace	Grand Haven
Arts Council of Greater Lansing	Lansing	Feeding America West Michigan	Comstock Park
Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote - Michigan	Detroit	Fetzer Institute	Kalamazoo
Bay-Lakes Council, Boy Scouts of America		Flint Youth Film Festival	Flint
Bettye Harris Larynx Cancer Awareness Center	Oak Park	Food Bank of South Central Michigan	Kalamazoo
Branch County Community Foundation	Coldwater	Forgotten Harvest	Oak Park
Brass Band of Battle Creek	Battle Creek	Freedom Road Transportation Authority	Orion
Cadillac Area YMCA	Cadillac	Fremont Area Community Foundation	Fremont
Calumet Theatre Co.	Calumet	Friends of Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, Inc.	Ontonagon
Capital Region Community Foundation	Lansing	Friends of the Braumart	Iron Mountain
Changing Lives And Staying Sober (CLASS)		Grand Rapids Community Foundation	Grand Rapids
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation	Flint	Grand Rapids Creative Youth Center	
Cherry Health Foundation	Grand Rapids	Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy	Traverse City
Child & Family Services of Northeast Michigan	Alpena	Great Lakes Center for Youth Development	Marquette
Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan		Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay	Traverse City
Citizen of Michigan		Habitat for Humanity Northeast Michigan	Alpena
Common Ground	Bloomfield	Habitat for Humanity of Michigan	Lansing
Community Action House	Holland	Habitat for Humanity Van Buren County	Bangor
Community Action of Allegan County	Allegan	Haiti Nursing Foundation	Ann Arbor
Community Foundation For Northeast Michigan	Alpena	Hamtramck Community Initiative	
Community Foundation of St. Clair County	Port Huron	Hand2Hand	
Council of Michigan Foundations	Grand Haven	Harbor Humane Society	West Olive
Creating Hope International	Dearborn	Hillman Community Radio	Hillman
Crim Fitness Foundation	Flint	Hope-Central	Lansing
Crooked Tree Arts Center	Petoskey		
Curtis Baptist Church	Curtis		
Defeat MSA	Detroit		

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**Michigan**

Huron River Citizens Association		R. E. Olds Foundation	East Lansing
Iosco County Coats for Kids	East Tawas	Radio First	Port Huron
Isle Royale & Keweenaw Parks Association	Houghton	Rainmaking For Good	Wixom
Jail and Outreach Ministry	Lake Orion	Real People Media	
Joy-Southfield Community Development Corporation	Detroit	Recovery Institute of Southwest Michigan	Kalamazoo
Kalamazoo Community Foundation	Kalamazoo	reQuest-Ed Learning Institute	Troy
Kids Repair Program	Lansing	Resolution Services Center	Lansing
Kirtland Community College Foundation	Roscommon	Rochester Area Neighborhood House	Rochester
Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy	Sault Ste Marie	Ruth Ellis Center	Detroit
Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity	Holland	Ruth Mott Foundation	Flint
Lakeshore Nonprofit Alliance	Holland	Schoolcraft County Economic Development Corporation	Manistique
Legal Assistance Center	Grand Rapids	South Bay Alpena	Alpena
Livingston County Habitat for Humanity, Inc.	Brighton	Southside Community Coalition	Lansing
Love In the Name of Christ SE Ottawa County	Hudsonville	Southwest Solutions	Detroit
Lymphoma Foundation of America		Special Ministries of Livingston County	Brighton
M&M Area Community Foundation	Menominee	Spectrum Health	Hastings
Manresa		St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center	Detroit
MARO		The Arc Michigan	Lansing
Martin Area Resource Center		The Cooperation Group	Highland Park
McGregor Fund	Detroit	The Detroit Institute of Arts	
Michigan Dental Association Foundation		The First Tee of Northern Michigan	Harbor Springs
Michigan Historic Preservation Network		The Goodwin Co.	Royal Oak
Michigan League for Public Policy	Lansing	The Great Lakes Children's Museum	Traverse City
Michigan Nonprofit Association		The Harry A and Margaret D Towsley Foundation	Ann Arbor
Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion		The Heat and Warmth Fund	Detroit
Michigan Science Center	Detroit	The Henry Ford	Dearborn
Mid-Michigan Industries	Mt. Pleasant	The Leelanau School	Glen Arbor
MNA Southeastern Michigan Public Policy Council	Detroit	The Skillman Foundation	Detroit
MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership	Detroit	The Women's Center of Southeastern Michigan	Ann Arbor
MSA Shoe	Saint Clair Shores	The YES Foundation	Bingham Farms
Nanette Pearson CPA, CGMA, CAE		The Center for Women in Transition	Holland
New Perspectives Group		Therapeutic Riding, Inc.	Ann Arbor
North Country Trail Association	Lowell	Thornapple Arts Council	Hastings
Northern Care Center	Cheboygan	Thunder Bay Folk Society	Alpena
Ozone House Youth & Family Services	Ann Arbor	Thunder Bay River Center, Inc.	Alpena
Peninsula Arts Appreciation Council	Negaunee	TIRF - The International Research Foundation for English Language Education	Traverse City
PPG Interactive Corp.	Ann Arbor	Tolfree Foundation	West Branch
Principia, LLC	Detroit	Transportation Riders United (TRU)	Detroit
Quincy Mine Hoist Association		TrueNorth Community Services	Fremont
		Upper Great Lakes Family Health Center	Houghton
		Voices for Earth Justice	Detroit
		Washtenaw Literacy	Ypsilanti

WasteWater Education 501(c)3  
William Bonifas Arts Center Escanaba  
Woodside Vision Foundation Troy

### 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