

I oppose this bill because it violates the First Amendment. The First Amendment reflects the foundational principles upon which the United States was built. It protects our freedom to express our beliefs, to think independently without government coercion, and to associate freely with others. These liberties are essential to a free society.

The government should not condition nonprofit status in ways that pressure organizations to limit or regulate the ideas they express. Yet this bill attempts to do exactly that. By granting the government power to impose fines and strip Maryland income tax, sales tax, and property tax exemptions from churches, parsonages, and religious schools for speaking about candidates or elections—our God-given liberty—the State of Maryland would be silencing both political and religious speech. This bill poses a direct threat to our constitutionally protected religious and political expression.

In South Korea, a pastor was imprisoned simply for speaking out on political issues. As a Korean-American, I have always been proud to live in the United States, where such government overreach should never occur. Our constitutional system is designed precisely to prevent abuses of power like this. What we see happening in South Korea today increasingly resembles the repression in North Korea, where people are not free to voice their opinions. We must ensure that nothing resembling that takes root in our country. This bill, however, sets a troubling precedent—undermining fundamental freedoms and attempting to punish churches for exercising them.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose this bill.

Janice Song