

I oppose this bill because it conflicts with the First Amendment.

The first Amendment reflects the foundational principles on which the United States was built. It protects the freedom to speak openly, to think independently without government coercion, and to associate freely with others. These liberties are not secondary rights. They are central to a free society.

The government should not condition nonprofit status in a way that pressures organizations to limit or control the ideas they express. Yet that is exactly what this bill would do. It would give the State of Maryland the authority to impose fines and potentially strip churches, parsonages, and religious schools of their Maryland income tax, sales tax, and property tax exemptions for speaking about candidates and elections.

When the government threatens financial penalties or removes longstanding tax exemptions because of speech, it creates pressure to remain silent. That is not neutrality. It is coercion.

Religious and political expression are explicitly protected by the Constitution. Conditioning tax status on silence about elections risks infringing on both. It places the government in the position of policing speech and determining when it crosses a line, which is deeply concerning in a free society.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose this bill.