

I stand in opposition to this bill because it conflicts with the protections guaranteed by the First Amendment. The First Amendment embodies the core principles upon which our nation was founded — safeguarding the freedom to speak openly, to hold and express beliefs without government interference, and to gather and associate freely. These rights are essential to preserving a truly free society.

The government should not tie nonprofit status to conditions that pressure organizations to censor or restrict their viewpoints. Yet this bill seeks to do exactly that. By granting the State of Maryland the authority to levy fines or revoke income tax, sales tax, and property tax exemptions from churches, parsonages, and religious schools based on their speech about candidates or elections, the bill effectively penalizes constitutionally protected expression. The ability to speak on moral and civic issues is a fundamental liberty, not a privilege to be granted or withdrawn by the state.

For these reasons, I firmly oppose this legislation.