

I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to HB0514.

This legislation raises serious constitutional concerns. The First Amendment embodies the core principles on which our nation was founded: the freedom to speak openly, to hold and express beliefs without government coercion, and to associate freely with others. These protections are not secondary privileges—they are essential pillars of a free and self-governing society.

HB0514 would effectively condition tax-exempt status on an organization's willingness to refrain from certain forms of political expression. By authorizing state officials to revoke income, sales, and property tax exemptions—including those of churches, parsonages, and religious schools—based on speech related to candidates or elections, the bill places significant pressure on charitable and religious institutions to limit what they say. When the government ties financial penalties to speech, it risks chilling constitutionally protected expression.

Religious institutions, in particular, operate not only as community organizations but also as places where moral and civic issues are often discussed through the lens of faith. For the State to threaten the withdrawal of longstanding tax exemptions because of such speech creates a serious tension with both the Free Speech and Free Exercise protections of the First Amendment. The government should not leverage its taxing authority to influence or silence religious or political viewpoints.

As a Korean-American, I am especially mindful of how fragile these freedoms can be. In South Korea, there have been instances in which clergy have faced legal consequences for expressing political views. One of the reasons I am proud to live in the United States is that our constitutional framework is designed specifically to guard against such governmental overreach. We have long distinguished ourselves as a nation that protects—even when controversial—the free expression of ideas. We should be careful not to move in a direction that could erode those protections or set a precedent for punishing disfavored speech.

For these reasons, I believe HB0514 undermines fundamental constitutional principles and risks infringing upon both religious liberty and political expression. I therefore strongly urge opposition to this bill.