

I oppose this bill because it conflicts with the First Amendment — one of the foundational principles upon which the United States was established. The First Amendment safeguards our freedom to express our beliefs, to think independently without government coercion, and to associate freely with others. These liberties are not secondary privileges; they are essential pillars of 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 this bill does precisely that. By granting the State of Maryland the authority to impose fines and revoke Maryland income tax, sales tax, and property tax exemptions from churches, parsonages, and religious schools for speaking about candidates or elections, the government would be using its financial power to regulate speech.

Religious and political expression are both constitutionally protected. When the government threatens penalties for engaging in such expression, it risks chilling speech and undermining the very freedoms it is sworn to protect. Faith communities do not surrender their First Amendment rights when they seek nonprofit status. Conditioning tax exemptions on silence regarding matters of public concern sets a troubling precedent.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose this bill.