

I respectfully oppose HB0514.

As a Korean-American, I do not take our constitutional freedoms for granted. In South Korea, there have been occasions when clergy faced legal consequences for expressing political views. Experiences like these are a reminder that freedoms of speech and religion can erode when governments begin to police expression. One of the reasons I value living in the United States is that our constitutional system is intentionally designed to prevent that kind of overreach and to safeguard even controversial viewpoints from government retaliation.

HB0514 moves in a troubling direction. By authorizing state officials to revoke income, sales, and property tax exemptions—including those granted to churches, parsonages, and religious schools—based on speech connected to candidates or elections, the bill effectively conditions tax-exempt status on an organization's silence. When the State attaches significant financial consequences to certain forms of expression, it exerts substantial pressure on organizations to self-censor. That kind of pressure risks chilling speech that would otherwise be fully protected.

This is particularly concerning for religious institutions. Churches and faith-based schools are not merely service providers; they are communities where moral and civic questions are frequently addressed through a religious lens. Public policy, leadership, and social issues are often intertwined with deeply held beliefs. Allowing the government to withdraw longstanding tax exemptions because of how these matters are discussed creates serious tension with both free speech and religious liberty protections.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution enshrines freedoms of speech, association, and religious exercise as cornerstones of our democratic system. These rights are not privileges that may be granted or revoked based on whether the government approves of the message being conveyed. Using the State's taxing authority to influence or penalize particular viewpoints undermines those foundational guarantees.

For these reasons, HB0514 raises significant constitutional concerns and threatens to weaken core protections that have long distinguished our nation. I therefore strongly urge opposition to this bill.