

I strongly oppose this bill because it undermines the First Amendment. The First Amendment reflects the foundational principles upon which the United States was established. It protects our freedom to express our beliefs, to think independently without government coercion, and to associate freely with others. These liberties are essential 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 this bill attempts to do exactly that. By granting the government the authority to impose fines and revoke Maryland income tax, sales tax, and property tax exemptions for churches, parsonages, and religious schools based on their speech regarding candidates or elections, the State of Maryland risks infringing upon constitutionally protected religious and political expression.

As a Korean American, I am especially sensitive to the dangers of government overreach. In South Korea, pastors have faced legal consequences for speaking publicly about political matters. One of the reasons I am proud to live in the United States is that our constitutional system is designed to prevent such abuses of power. The strength of our nation lies in protecting free expression — even when that expression involves religious or political viewpoints.

This bill sets a troubling precedent. It risks undermining the very freedoms the Constitution was designed to safeguard and could create a chilling effect on churches and faith-based institutions exercising their First Amendment rights.

For these reasons, I respectfully and firmly oppose this bill.