

I oppose this bill because it directly conflicts with the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The First Amendment embodies the foundational principles upon which our nation was established, safeguarding the freedom to express beliefs, to think independently without government coercion, and to associate freely with others. These liberties are essential to a free and democratic society.

The government should not condition nonprofit status in a manner that pressures organizations to restrict or regulate the ideas they express. Yet, this bill seeks to do 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 on candidates and elections—activities that fall within our God-given liberties—the bill attempts to suppress political and religious speech. Such actions would infringe upon constitutionally protected rights to free religious and political expression.

In South Korea, a pastor was imprisoned for expressing his political views. As a Korean American, I have long taken pride in living in the United States—a nation where such governmental overreach should not occur. One of the core reasons for this pride lies in our constitutional system, which is designed to prevent abuses of governmental power. What we are witnessing in South Korea increasingly resembles the oppressive conditions of communist North Korea, where citizens are denied the freedom to express their opinions. This is a situation we must strive to avoid in the United States. Unfortunately, this bill establishes a troubling precedent, undermines the foundations of our freedoms, and seeks to punish churches for exercising rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose this bill.