



February 9, 2026

To the Maryland General Assembly,

On behalf of Manna Food Center, we strongly advocate for the adoption of bill SB4 sponsored by Senators Ferguson and Kagan, and voice our opposition to any proposals that would politicize the charitable nonprofit and philanthropic community by repealing or weakening current federal tax law protections that prohibit 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates.

Manna Food Center has served residents in Montgomery County, Maryland, since its humble beginnings in a vacant elementary school in 1983, serving just a few hundred recipients with a single pledge of \$3,100, and a donation of 16,000 pounds of food. In 2025, 42 years later, Manna distributed **3.14 million pounds of food**, infused **\$356,450** into the local economy, and utilized our novel Farm to Food Bank program to purchase **224,644 pounds of food** from **33** farms and farmers markets for distribution to **70 beneficiary organizations**. Our robust network of connections to American farmers, charitable nonprofits, foundations, religious organizations, and people-driven local initiatives is dependent on a **foundational nonpartisan commitment** to eradicating hunger in our communities.

Public trust in this network of food system organizations has allowed us to jointly meet growing food insecurity in our region. However, if even just a few charitable non-profits, foundations, or religious organizations in our network were to begin engaging in political campaigns on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidates for public office, this critical network could rapidly deteriorate. The resulting polarization's worst impacts would include an unprecedented number of working families unable to access food assistance during a time of rising grocery prices, alongside a significant reduction of dollars infused into the local economy through charitable work. Moreover, nonpartisan credibility is critical to the ability of 501(c)(3) organizations to work with elected officials of all parties at the local, state, and federal levels to address community needs.

Charitable nonprofits like ourselves are free to speak on important matters of the day and advocate on public policy issues and legislation. At Manna Food Center, remaining nonpartisan ensures that we can maintain our advocacy efforts while simultaneously stewarding keystone spaces where all members of our community can voice their opinions, freely exchange ideas, and uplift our community through dialogue and collaboration.

**We are profoundly concerned that weakening the Johnson Amendment will dismantle local food system economies, resulting in real consequences for the millions of children, parents, older adults, veterans, people with disabilities, and all those who depend on strong, nonpartisan civil society networks to make this country a great nation. The Johnson Amendment plays a critical role in ensuring that Americans can live strong, healthy lives, while utilizing nonpartisan charitable networks and spaces for the free exchange of ideas in order to make profound contributions to our society at local, state, and national levels.**



**We urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass SB4 to protect charitable nonprofits, foundations, religious organizations, and our intertwined nonpartisan networks, for the health and wellbeing of all Maryland residents.**

Sincerely,  
Manna Food Center

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