November 3, 2017

Dear Senator/Representative,

The undersigned Jewish nonprofits, charitable organizations, and religious institutions strongly oppose any efforts to repeal or weaken current law that prohibits 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates. The existing law, known as the Johnson Amendment, is vital to preserving the charitable sector’s integrity and the public’s trust in our organizations. As Congress considers comprehensive tax reform, we urge you to reject any measures that would undermine the Johnson Amendment and needlessly politicize charitable and faith communities.

Pirkei Avot, perhaps the most important Jewish ethical treatise, teaches us that “the crown of a good name is superior to them all.” The integrity of our “good name” is essential to our ability to fulfill our missions. As charitable organizations, it is our life’s work to serve the most vulnerable among us and advocate for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

Charitable nonprofits and houses of worship can only be successful if we maintain public trust in our integrity and commitment to mission. Politicizing them for the benefit of politicians and partisan donors would destroy that trust. Every charitable dollar spent on partisan campaign politics is one less dollar spent on the public good.

Under current law, charitable nonprofits enjoy broad latitude to speak on important public matters, advocate on policy issues, encourage people to vote, and even host candidate debates and forums. Weakening the Johnson Amendment risks dividing charities and houses of worship along partisan lines. At a time when our political climate is already so polarized, we stand firmly against any measure that would bring politics into our organizations and reduce our effectiveness.

As charitable nonprofits and houses of worship, we forego profits, privacy, and politics in order to serve our communities and do good works. We ask that you protect the integrity of our work, our good name, and the health of our democracy by opposing any efforts to undermine the Johnson Amendment.

Sincerely,

Jewish Council for Public Affairs
The Jewish Federations of North America