

March 9, 2017

The Honorable James McGovern  
United States House of Representatives  
Room 438, Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Strong Opposition to S.264/H.R.781

Dear Representative McGovern:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network (MNN) we want to express our opposition to legislation (S.264/H.R.781) that would change established federal law conditioning tax-exempt status for Section 501(c)(3) organizations in part on their refraining from engaging in partisan, election-related activities for or against candidates for public office (the so-called “Johnson Amendment”). In our view, the Johnson Amendment protects charitable nonprofits, foundations, and religious congregations from political activities and allows them to be nonpartisan problem solvers.

The Massachusetts Nonprofit Network (MNN) is the Commonwealth’s nonprofit association. We have over 750 member organizations, representing nonprofits in every region of the state. Our members come from all sub-sectors of the nonprofit world and are the cornerstones of communities throughout Massachusetts. **The Massachusetts Nonprofit Network *strongly opposes efforts to politicize charitable nonprofits.*** Remaining nonpartisan – by not endorsing or contributing to candidates – enables Massachusetts nonprofits to put politics aside, collaborate on pressing social issues, all while enhancing the public’s trust in the greater charitable community.

Under current federal law, 501(c)(3) organizations have long been permitted to conduct unlimited issue advocacy and engage in a limited amount of legislative lobbying. This allows nonprofits to work with legislators to advance their missions and important public policies, while protecting them from being labeled as a Republican or Democrat charitable organization. In fact, one of MNN’s cornerstones is to bring together nonprofits, funders, business leaders, and elected officials to strengthen nonprofits and raise the sector’s voice on critical issues. In addition, for those who want to endorse candidates, any individual, including nonprofit and religious leaders, have the ability to exercise their first amendment rights and participate, individually, in the political process.

MNN believes that the work and effectiveness of nonprofits could be irreparably harmed if the Johnson amendment was repealed. It is vital that 501(c)(3) organizations continue to be a place where people of all beliefs and backgrounds work together to make our

Commonwealth a better place for all Massachusetts families. And in doing so, we can ensure that the integrity and nonpartisan credibility of the charitable nonprofit sector stays intact.

We respectfully request that you support efforts to ensure nonprofits remain nonpartisan and oppose any efforts to politicize or jeopardize the effectiveness and integrity of the nonprofit sector. We would be glad to act as a resource and work with you and your staff to answer any questions or provide any additional information you may require.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Klocke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Klocke".

Jim Klocke  
Chief Executive Officer  
Massachusetts Nonprofit Network