To: State legislators
From: Trained chaplains in the United States
Re: Public school chaplain programs
Date: March 6, 2024

We, the undersigned chaplains, write in opposition to legislation in states across the country that would install chaplains in our public schools. Because of our training and experience, we urge you to reject public school “chaplain” legislation: The proposals are harmful to our public schools and the students and families they serve.

Government-sanctioned chaplains make sense in some settings, but not in our public schools. We come from a diversity of faith and ethical traditions, and we proudly serve or have served in various capacities. Many of us have served in contexts in which individuals cannot access their religious services — such as the military, a prison, or hospital — which is hardly the case for children in public school. Military members may have security or language barriers in finding a house of worship while on deployment. Incarcerated individuals are not given a “religious hall pass” to leave prison and attend the corporate worship service of their own choosing. Hospitalized patients may be too sick or far away from their congregations to engage in meaningful religious exercise. Public school children do not face the barriers to religious exercise that service members, prisoners, and patients face.

We care about student mental health and safety concerns, and we believe those concerns should be addressed by the professionals most skilled to meet those concerns. As trained chaplains, we are not qualified to address the needs of public school students that these proposals purport to address. We cooperate with mental health counselors — we do not compete with them. Further, professions that help children with sensitive matters, such as therapists and police investigators, typically require special training on how to interview and treat juveniles. Few chaplains have this expertise.

As trained chaplains, we strongly caution against the government assertion of authority for the spiritual development and formation of our public school children. Families and religious institutions—not public school officials—should direct the religious education of our children. Introducing religious leaders into official school positions to serve students in schools will cause division among student bodies that are made up of many religions and nonreligious students.

Public schools are fully funded by the government and serve people of all faith traditions and of no faith tradition. Having government-sponsored chaplains, paid or volunteer, is inappropriate and threatens to harm our public schools and the students and families they serve.

Respectfully,
Susan Abold
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Robert Adrian
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Rev. Jann Aldredge-Clanton
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Sheri Allen
Judaism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Paul Alley
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
FL

Erskine Alvis
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Meredith Anderson
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare, Correctional and Rehabilitation Chaplain
VT

Allison Angell
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Krysta Baglien
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
ID

Tricia Baldwin
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Karen Ballard
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
SC

Claire Bamberg
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
VT

Beach Beauchamp
Episcopal Church
Military Chaplain
NM

Tom Becraft
Seventh-day Adventist
Healthcare Chaplain
WA

Sarah Berel-Harrop
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Kathy Berry
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

Charline Berry
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
MD

Andrew Bowles
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Mary Bradley
Baptist
Healthcare, Homeless Chaplain
TX

Jim Browning
Baptist
Military, Education Chaplain
TX
The Rev. Dan Buchin
Episcopal Church Civic, Private Chaplain MI

Kristin Burrow
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Healthcare Chaplain TX

Wanda Burton-Crutchfield
Baptist Hospice Chaplain NC

Cyrus Bush
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Healthcare Chaplain NC

Paul Byrd
Baptist Healthcare, Retired Chaplain GA

Karen Calafat
Episcopal Church Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain TX

Patrick Cardwell
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Healthcare Chaplain NC

Jacob Christian
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Healthcare Chaplain GA

Colleen Clark
Unitarian Universalism Hospice Chaplain NC

Craig Clark
Episcopal Church Hospice Chaplain NJ

James Clarke
Unitarian Universalism Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain PA

Michael Tevya Cohen
Judaism Senior Community Chaplain TX

Deborah Cole
Unitarian Universalism Hospice Chaplain MD

Harry Conner
Church of Christ Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain KY

Jeni Cook
Baptist Healthcare Chaplain TX

William Cork
Other Military, Healthcare, Education Chaplain TX

David Cowell
United Church of Christ Healthcare Chaplain CA

Rev. Nicole Cruz-Talkington
Presbyterian Church (USA) Healthcare Chaplain TX

Terri Daniel
Not Religious Hospice Chaplain OR

David Deming
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain SC
Inge Detweiler
United Church of Christ
Community Chaplain
AZ

Donna Dickerson
Society of Friends (Quaker)
Healthcare, Private Chaplain
TX

Bobby Dickerson
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Military, Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
FL

Rev. Zorena Dombrowski
Other
Family, Business Chaplain
CA

Susan Douglas
Episcopal Church
Healthcare, Education Chaplain
TX

E. Scott Dow
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
ME

Vicki Dullye
Other
Retired Chaplain
TX

Robert Duvall
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
GA

Raye Nell Dyer
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TN

Lisa Easterling
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
MS

Steven Edmonds
Southern Baptist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
MS

Kimberly Emery
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Private Chaplain
TX

Alton Ethridge
Baptist
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Charlotte Evans
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

James Farinet
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
OH

Joe Farry
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
SC

Rya Fordice
Humanism
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
IL

Joy Freeman
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KS

Sharon Fry
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

Matthew Fuller
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
WI
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Galo</td>
<td>Episcopal Church Healthcare Chaplain</td>
<td>NJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francisco Gamez</td>
<td>Humanism Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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<td>David Gladson</td>
<td>Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alicia Gomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>R. Mark Grace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lauren Greenwade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dagmar Grefe</td>
<td>United Church of Christ Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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<td>Kelly Gregory</td>
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<td>Susan Gregory-Davis</td>
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<td>Dorie Griggs</td>
<td>Non-Denominational Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christine Haider-Winnett</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa Hair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marion Hamermesh</td>
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<td>Kirsten Hancock</td>
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<td>James Harper</td>
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<td>Brenda Harris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Harris-Lamkin</td>
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<td>Cynthia Henderson</td>
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<td>Erin Hensley</td>
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<td>David Howard</td>
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<td>C. Brent Hoy-Bianchi</td>
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<td>Claude Huguley</td>
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<td>Gerry Hutchinson</td>
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<td>Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Military Chaplain</td>
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<td>Andi Ingram</td>
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<td>Virginia Ireland</td>
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<td>Annamma Johns</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
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<td>Remington Johnson</td>
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<td>Maggie Johnson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Johnson</td>
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Sheree Jones
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Betsy Kammerdiener
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TN

Anna Kendig Flores, BCC
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Justice Chaplain
MN

Rev. Dan King
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare, Hospice, Private Chaplain
TX

Jo Kirkendall
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
MS

Kristin Klade
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
TX

Mary Klaehn
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
AZ

Charles Kniker
United Church of Christ
Chaplain
IA

Kay Kopatich
Non-Denominational
Healthcare, Correctional and Rehabilitation, Education Chaplain
IA

Sue Krayer
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

James Lavoy
Other
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
PA

Doug Laws
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Stacy Lawton
Baptist
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
SC

Chelsea Leitcher
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
CA

Stephen Lemons, BCC
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
SC

Linda Lewis
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Eugene Locke
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

April Long
Other
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Britt Luby
Roman Catholic
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Deborah Lynn
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
TN
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Church/Chaplain</th>
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<tr>
<td>Karen MacDonald</td>
<td>United Church of Christ Hospice Chaplain</td>
<td>AZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shawn Mai</td>
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<td>Michael Maness</td>
<td>Southern Baptist Church Correctional and Rehabilitation Chaplain</td>
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<td>Ann Carol Mann</td>
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<td>Chris Mason</td>
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<td>Sandra Masters</td>
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<td>Rev. Patrick McCollum</td>
<td>Non-Denominational Hospice, Correctional and Rehabilitation, Civic, Private Chaplain</td>
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<td>Jordan McGinnis</td>
<td>Humanism Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain</td>
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<td>Lynn McLaughlin</td>
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<td>Rev. Linda McWhorter</td>
<td>Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Hospice Chaplain</td>
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<td>Wyatt Miles</td>
<td>Baptist Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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<td>Stan Moody</td>
<td>Baptist Healthcare, Correctional and Rehabilitation, Private Chaplain</td>
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<td>Susan Morgan</td>
<td>United Methodist Church Hospice, Retired Chaplain</td>
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<td>Jean Murphy</td>
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<td>Rev. Dr. Chad Mustain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Neeley</td>
<td>Baptist Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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</table>
Drew Nelson
Not Religious
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
TX

Twyla Nelson
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Lucas Neville
United Church of Christ
Healthcare, Correctional and Rehabilitation Chaplain
TX

Ric Olsen
Baptist
Public Safety Chaplain
CA

Donna Olsen
Non-Denominational
Private Chaplain
ND

Christopher O'Rear
Baptist
Former Hospital Chaplain, currently religiously endorsed pastoral psychotherapist
TN

Staci Orr
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Randolph Parks
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
NJ

Charlie Patrick
Baptist
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
NC

Kate Perry
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
ME

Thomas Phillips
United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
FL

Nancy Piggott
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

David Plummer
Non-Denominational
Endorsing Chaplain
FL

Russ Pollock
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Education Chaplain
OK

Jeremy Pope
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Hospice Chaplain
TX

James Pope
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military Chaplain
FL

Edward Porter
United Church of Christ
Healthcare, Veterans Affairs Chaplain
MI

Kenneth Ramsey
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Deborah Reeves
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Charles Reynolds
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military, Correctional and Rehabilitation Chaplain, Chaplain Endorser
SC
Matthew Rhodes
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
NJ

Katrina Shawgo
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Claire Richardson
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
CA

Elisabeth Shewmaker
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Private Chaplain
NH

Paul Robertson
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Leslie Smith
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Layne Rogerson
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Hospice Chaplain
SC

Mark Smith
Reformed Church in America
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
NJ

Diane Root
Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NH

Lynne Spencer
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Cody Sanders
Baptist
Theological Educator of Chaplains
MN

Tom Stephenson
United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Daniel Schlorff
Congregational Church
Healthcare Chaplain
CT

James Sterling
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Healthcare Chaplain
AZ

Lisa D. Schoenwetter
United Church of Christ
Retired Chaplain
WI

Ben Stewart
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Seafarers Chaplain
KY

Pastor Tom Schwolert
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Adolescent Mental Health Chaplain
TX

Eileen Stone
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
FL

Salvatore Seirmarco
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
NJ

Valerie Storms
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
FL
Bert Strange
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military, Hospice, Education Chaplain
SC

Thomas Stratman
Non-Denominational
Military, Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
MO

Jan Sullivan
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain
TX

Lauri Swann
Baptist
Healthcare, Psychiatric Chaplain
DC

Don Tastad
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare, Private Chaplain
MN

Jamez Terry
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
AK

Bob Thomason
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Disabilities and Special Needs Chaplain
SC

Michele Thompson
Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Chris Towles
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Education Chaplain
NC

Alice Tremaine
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
KY

Kory Trinrud
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
GA

Adam Tyler
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

Terri Tyson
Non-Denominational
Healthcare Chaplain
IL

Humberto Vargas-Vidal
Church of Christ
Healthcare, Hospice, Civic Chaplain
FL

William von Dohlen
Baptist
Military Chaplain
TN

Cecelia Walker
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
AL

Kurt Walker
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
OH

Erin Walter
Unitarian Universalism
Civic Chaplain
TX

Todd Walter
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
SC

Willim Ware
Unitarian Universalism
Private Chaplain
OR
Clyde Waters
Baptist
Public Safety Chaplain
SC

David Watson
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
OR

Rev. Mary Lewis Webb
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Healthcare, Veterans Affairs Chaplain
VT

Todd Weber
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military, Hospice Chaplain
KY

Amanda Wertz
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Lawrence Whitney
Other
Education Chaplain
MA

Nancy Wiener
Judaism
Chaplain
NY

Dennis Wienk
Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NY

Linda Wilkerson
Baptist
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Ben Williams
Church of the Nazarene
Healthcare Chaplain
OH

Rev. Sue Wintz
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Retired Healthcare Chaplain
AZ

Paula Womack
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Christy Wood
United Church of Christ
Hospice Chaplain
TX

John Woodruff
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
MN

Ellen Woodruff
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
MN

George Worthington
Humanism
Private Chaplain
TX

L. Darrel Wrider
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
IA

James Wright
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
TX

Alan Wright
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Rev. Mike Wright-Chapman
United Church of Christ
Hospice Chaplain
TX
Donna Zuroweste
Roman Catholic
Healthcare, Public Safety, Private Chaplain
MO