

To: State legislators
From: Trained chaplains in the United States
Re: Public school chaplain programs
Date: April 19, 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,

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United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Krysta Baglien
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
ID

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Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Rev. Jann Aldredge-Clanton
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Karen Ballard
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
SC

Sheri Allen
Judaism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Claire Bamberg
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
VT

Paul Alley
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
FL

Beach Beauchamp
Episcopal Church
Military Chaplain
NM

Erskine Alvis
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Tom Becraft
Seventh-Day Adventist
Healthcare Chaplain
WA

Meredith Anderson
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare, Correctional and Rehabilitation
Chaplain
VT

Sarah Berel-Harrop
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Allison Angell
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Kathy Berry
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

Charline Berry
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
MD

Paul Byrd
Baptist
Healthcare, Retired Chaplain
GA

Andrew Bowles
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

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Episcopal Church
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
TX

Mary Bradley
Baptist
Healthcare, Homeless Chaplain
TX

Kelly Campbell
Community Church
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
UT

Jim Browning
Baptist
Military, Education Chaplain
TX

Patrick Cardwell
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

The Rev. Dan Buchin
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Civic, Private Chaplain
MI

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

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

Colleen Clark
Unitarian Universalism
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Wanda Burton-Crutchfield
Baptist
Hospice, Chaplain
NC

Craig Clark
Episcopal Church
Hospice Chaplain
NJ

Cyrus Bush
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Healthcare Chaplain
NC

James Clarke
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain
PA

Michael Tevya Cohen
Judaism
Senior Community Chaplain
TX

Rev. Dr. Chuck Currie
United Church of Christ
Education Chaplain
OR

Deborah Cole
Unitarian Universalism
Hospice Chaplain
MD

Terri Daniel
Not Religious
Hospice Chaplain
OR

Harry Conner
Church of Christ
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
KY

Joel DeFehr
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
OK

Jeni Cook
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

David Deming
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
SC

William Cork
Other
Military, Healthcare, Education Chaplain
TX

Inge Detweiler
United Church of Christ
Community Chaplain
AZ

David Cowell
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
CA

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Society of Friends (Quaker)
Healthcare, Private Chaplain
TX

Kate Crecelius
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
IN

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TX

Rev. Zorena Dombrowski
Other
Family, Business Chaplain
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Education Chaplain
IL

Kimberly Emery
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Private Chaplain
TX

Susan Douglas
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Healthcare, Education Chaplain
TX

Alton Ethridge
Baptist
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Scott Dow
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Healthcare Chaplain
ME

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Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

Vicki Dullye
Other
Retired Chaplain
TX

James Farinet
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Healthcare Chaplain
OH

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Healthcare Chaplain
GA

Andy Farmer
Baptist
Education Chaplain
FL

Raye Nell Dyer
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TN

Joe Farry
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
SC

Lisa Easterling
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
MS

Rya Fordice
Humanism
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
IL

Steven Edmonds
Southern Baptist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
MS

James Franklin
Episcopal Church
Education Chaplain
NC

Joy Freeman
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KS

Sharon Fry
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
WI

Sarah Galo
Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NJ

Francisco Gamez
Humanism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Robert Garrett
Baptist
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
NC

Joel Gilbertson
Other
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IA

David Gladson
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GA

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Parochial School Chaplain
FL

Mark Grace
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Healthcare Chaplain
TX

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Hospice Chaplain
TX

Dagmar Grefe
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
CA

Kelly Gregory
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare, Chaplain
NM

Susan Gregory-Davis
United Church of Christ
Healthcare, Chaplain
NH

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Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain
GA

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TN

Christine Haider-Winnett
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CA

Elizabeth Harris-Lamkin
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Military, Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Lisa Hair
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Education Chaplain
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Arden Heath
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Healthcare Chaplain
WI

Al Hall
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
FL

Cynthia Henderson
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Private Chaplain
NC

Marion Hamermesh
Other
Hospice Chaplain
DE

Virginia Henley
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
MO

Kirsten Hancock
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Joanne Henley
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Healthcare Chaplain
NC

James Harper
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KS

Erin Hensley
Episcopal Church
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Brenda Harris
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Britt Hicks
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Missy Harris
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Tami Higdon
Baptist
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FL

Rev. Maurice Hinson
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Hospice Chaplain
SC

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TX

Carrie Holley-Hurt
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Social Movement Chaplain
TX

Virginia Ireland
Other
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TN

Daniel Horwitz
Judaism
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TX

Steve Isenman
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CA

David Howard
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Kelly Jackson
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Education Chaplain
VA

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AL

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Buddhism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

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TN

Remington Johnson
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Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Maggie Johnson
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TX

Mary Klaehn
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Healthcare Chaplain
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AL

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IA

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Justice Chaplain
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MO

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VA

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MO

April Long
Other
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TX

Britt Luby
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TX

Deborah Lynn
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TN

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AZ

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TX

Ann Carol Mann
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NC

Irene Martinez
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FL

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WV

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VA

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TX

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Donna Olsen
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ND

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Baptist
Mental Health Chaplain
TN

Staci Orr
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Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Kate Perry
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ME

Erin Phelps
Baptist
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KY

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FL

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TX

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FL

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Hospice Chaplain
TX

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MI

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TX

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SC

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NJ

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Other
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NJ

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TN

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Hospice Chaplain
TX

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Hospice Chaplain
TX

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TX

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Seafarers Chaplain
KY

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VA

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FL

Valerie Storms
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TX

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GA

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Healthcare Chaplain
MN

Adam Tyler
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OR

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Unitarian Universalism
Civic Chaplain
TX

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Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Todd Walter
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
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SC

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Other
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Private Chaplain
OR

Nancy Wiener
Judaism
Jewish Chaplain
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Brian Warfield
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Healthcare Chaplain
OK

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Public Safety Chaplain
SC

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NC

Ben Williams
Church of the Nazarene
Healthcare Chaplain
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Humanism
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Retired Healthcare Chaplain
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KY

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Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Christy Wood
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Hospice Chaplain
TX

John Woodruff
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MN

Ellen Woodruff
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
MN

Laura Woods
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OK

George Worthington
Humanism
Private Chaplain
TX

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Healthcare Chaplain
IA

James Wright
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Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
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Alan Wright
Baptist
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TX

Rev. Mike Wright-Chapman
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