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,
Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
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-Crutcherfield  
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

Kelly Campbell  
Community Church  
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain  
UT

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

*Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs*
Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Eric Doolittle
United Methodist Church
Education Chaplain
IL

Susan Douglas
Episcopal Church
Healthcare, Education Chaplain
TX

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

Andy Farmer
Baptist
Education Chaplain
FL

Joe Farry
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
SC

Rya Fordice
Humanism
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
IL

James Franklin
Episcopal Church
Education Chaplain
NC

*Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs*
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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Joy Freeman</td>
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<td>Olen Grubbs</td>
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*Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs*
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<td>Christine Haider-Winnett</td>
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<td>Al Hall</td>
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<td>Arden Heath</td>
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<td>Cynthia Henderson</td>
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<td>Joanne Henley</td>
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<td>Britt Hicks</td>
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<td>Tami Higdon</td>
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*Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs*
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<td>Gerry Hutchinson</td>
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<td>Andi Ingram</td>
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<td>Kelly Jackson</td>
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<td>Remington Johnson</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
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*Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs*
Maggie Johnson
United Methodist Church
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
TX

Mark Johnson
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
AL

Sheree Jones
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Betsy Kammerdiener
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TN

Anna Kendig Flores
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

Leah Knox
Baptist
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
PA

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

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

Chelsea May LaRue
Humanism
Healthcare Chaplain
MI

James Lavoy
Other
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
PA

Doug Laws
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

*Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs*
Stacy Lawton
Baptist
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
SC

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

Stephen Lemons
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
SC

Linda Lewis
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Carmen Lile-Henley
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
MO

Eugene Locke
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

Alan Londy
Judaism
Healthcare Chaplain
MO

April Long
Other
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Britt Luby
Roman Catholic
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Deborah Lynn
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
TN

Karen MacDonald
United Church of Christ
Hospice Chaplain
AZ

Shawn Mai
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
MN

Michael Maness
Southern Baptist Church
Correctional and Rehabilitation Chaplain
TX

Ann Carol Mann
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
AL

Donna Manning
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military, Healthcare, Correctional and Rehabilitation Chaplain
TX

Mary Martin
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
NC

Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Irene Martinez  
Non-Denominational Chaplain  
FL

Chris Mason  
Other Healthcare Chaplain  
WV

Sandra Masters  
Presbyterian Healthcare Chaplain  
NY

Rev. Patrick McCollum  
Non-Denominational Hospice, Correctional and Rehabilitation, Civic, Private Chaplain  
CA

Jordan McGinnis  
Humanism Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain  
TX

Lynn McLaughlin  
Baptist Healthcare, Prison Chaplain  
NC

Barb McRae  
Presbyterian Church (USA) Healthcare Chaplain  
MI

Rev. Linda McWhorter  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Hospice Chaplain  
TX

Wyatt Miles  
Baptist Healthcare Chaplain  
GA

Stan Moody  
Baptist Healthcare, Correctional and Rehabilitation, Private Chaplain  
ME

Susan Morgan  
United Methodist Church Hospice, Retired Chaplain  
AZ

John Mueller  
Roman Catholic Healthcare, Hospice, Education Chaplain  
NE

Ryan Mulkowsky  
Humanism Hospice Chaplain  
GA

Jean Murphy  
Presbyterian Church (USA) Healthcare Chaplain  
KS

Rev. Dr. Chad Mustain  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Healthcare Chaplain  
TX

Sarah Neeley  
Baptist Healthcare Chaplain  
TX

Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Drew Nelson  
Not Religious  
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain  
TX

Twyla Nelson  
Baptist  
Hospice Chaplain  
NC

Karl Netting  
United Methodist Church  
Hospice Chaplain  
VA

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  
Mental Health Chaplain  
TN

Staci Orr  
United Methodist Church  
Healthcare Chaplain  
TX

Randolph Parks  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship  
Healthcare Chaplain  
NJ

Charlie Patrick  
Baptist  
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain  
NC

Larry Payne  
Baptist  
Hospice Chaplain  
TX

Kate Perry  
Baptist  
Healthcare Chaplain  
ME

Erin Phelps  
Baptist  
Healthcare Chaplain  
KY

Thomas Phillips  
United Methodist Church  
Hospice Chaplain  
FL

Nancy Piggott  
United Church of Christ  
Healthcare Chaplain  
TX

David Plummer  
Non-Denominational  
Endorsing Chaplain  
FL

Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
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 Chaplain
SC

Matthew Rhodes
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
NJ

Claire Richardson
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
CA

Paul Robertson
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Layne Rogerson
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Hospice Chaplain
SC

Diane Root
Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NH

Cody Sanders
Baptist
Theological Educator of Chaplains
MN

Daniel Schlorff
Congregational Church
Healthcare Chaplain
CT

Karen Schmeltekopf
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Lisa Schoenwetter
United Church of Christ
Retired Chaplain
WI

Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Pastor Tom Schwolert
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Adolescent Mental Health Chaplain
TX

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

Katrina Shawgo
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Elisabeth Shewmaker
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Private Chaplain
NH

Robert Small
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
AL

Leslie Smith
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Mark Smith
Reformed Church in America
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
NJ

Suzanne Hilton Smith
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
<table>
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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Valerie Storms</td>
<td>Other Healthcare Chaplain</td>
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<td>Bert Strange</td>
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<td>Thomas Stratman</td>
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<td>Jan Sullivan</td>
<td>Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain</td>
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<td>Michele Thompson</td>
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<td>Humberto Vargas-Vidal</td>
<td>Church of Christ Healthcare, Hospice, Civic Chaplain</td>
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*Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs*
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

Brian Warfield
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
OK

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
Jewish Chaplain
NY

Dennis Wienk
Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NY

Linda Wilkerson
Baptist
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
TX

*Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs*
Carol Wilkinson
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Ben Williams
Church of the Nazarene
Healthcare Chaplain
OH

Courtney Wilson
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Danette Windsor
Humanism
Healthcare, Hospice, Private Chaplain
TX

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

Rev. Kelley Woggon
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KY

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

Laura Woods
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
OK

George Worthington
Humanism
Private Chaplain
TX

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

Chaplains Say “No” to Public School Chaplain Programs
Donna Zuroweste
Roman Catholic Healthcare, Public Safety, Private Chaplain
MO