

To: State legislators
From: Trained chaplains in the United States
Re: Public school chaplain programs
Date: May 21, 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

Krysta Baglien
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
ID

Robert Adrian
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Tricia Baldwin
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

Wanda Burton-Crutchfield
Baptist
Hospice, Chaplain
NC

Andrew Bowles
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Cyrus Bush
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Mary Bradley
Baptist
Healthcare, Homeless Chaplain
TX

Paul Byrd
Baptist
Healthcare, Retired Chaplain
GA

Rev. Ginny Bridges Ireland
Other
Hospice
TN

Karen Calafat
Episcopal Church
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
TX

Melvin Brinkley
United Methodist Church
Military
CA

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
Episcopal Church
Civic, Private Chaplain
MI

Rev. Clare Watson Chance
United Methodist Church
Hospice
FL

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

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

Colleen Clark
Unitarian Universalism
Hospice Chaplain
NC

David Cowell
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
CA

Craig Clark
Episcopal Church
Hospice Chaplain
NJ

Kate Crecelius
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
IN

James Clarke
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain
PA

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

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

Michael Davis
Baptist
Healthcare
TX

Jeni Cook
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Joel DeFehr
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
OK

William Cork
Other
Military, Healthcare, Education Chaplain
TX

David Deming
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
SC

Inge Detweiler
United Church of Christ
Community Chaplain
AZ

Robert Duvall
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
GA

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

Raye Nell Dyer
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TN

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

Lisa Easterling
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
MS

Rev. Zorena Dombrowski
Other
Family, Business Chaplain
CA

Steven Edmonds
Southern Baptist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
MS

Eric Doolittle
United Methodist Church
Education Chaplain
IL

Rev. Russell Elleven
Unitarian Universalism
Private
TX

Susan Douglas
Episcopal Church
Healthcare, Education Chaplain
TX

Kimberly Emery
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Private Chaplain
TX

Scott Dow
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
ME

Alton Ethridge
Baptist
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Vicki Dullye
Other
Retired Chaplain
TX

Charlotte Evans
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

Jaylyne Falkner
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Private
UT

Sharon Fry
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
VA

James Farinet
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
OH

Matthew Fuller
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
WI

Andy Farmer
Baptist
Education Chaplain
FL

Sarah Galo
Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NJ

Joe Farry
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
SC

Francisco Gamez
Humanism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Wendy Fish
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare
OR

Robert Garrett
Baptist
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
NC

Rya Fordice
Humanism
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
IL

Joel Gilbertson
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
IA

Rev. James Franklin
Episcopal Church
Education Chaplain
NC

David Gladson
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
GA

Joy Freeman
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KS

Alicia Gomes
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Parochial School Chaplain
FL

Mark Grace
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Christine Haider-Winnett
Roman Catholic
Healthcare, Hospice
CA

Lauren Greenwade
Episcopal Church
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Lisa Hair
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Education Chaplain
PA

Dagmar Grefe
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
CA

Al Hall
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
FL

Kelly Gregory
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare, Chaplain
NM

Marion Hamermesh
Other
Hospice Chaplain
DE

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

Kirsten Hancock
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Dorie Griggs
Non-Denominational
Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain
GA

James Harper
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KS

Olen Grubbs
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
TN

Brenda Harris
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Rachel Gunter Shapard
Cooperative Baptist
Hospice
FL

Missy Harris
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Elizabeth Harris-Lamkin
Baptist
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Rev. Maurice Hinson
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
SC

Arden Heath
Non-Denominational
Healthcare Chaplain
WI

Dean Hokel
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Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
AZ

Cynthia Henderson
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Private Chaplain
NC

Carrie Holley-Hurt
Unitarian Universalism
Social Movement Chaplain
TX

Virginia Henley
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
MO

Daniel Horwitz
Judaism
Private Chaplain
TX

Joanne Henley
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

David Howard
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Erin Hensley
Episcopal Church
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Ronald Howard
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Military, Healthcare Chaplain
AL

Britt Hicks
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Brent Hoy-Bianchi
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
NV

Tami Higdon
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
FL

Claude Huguley
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
TN

Gerry Hutchinson
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military Chaplain
GA

Andi Ingram
Baptist
Military Chaplain
TX

Virginia Ireland
Other
Hospice Chaplain
TN

Steve Isenman
United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
CA

Kelly Jackson
United Methodist Church
Education Chaplain
VA

Elizabeth Jackson-Jordan
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
GA

Rev. Jill James
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare
OR

Sandra John
Baptist
Hospice
CA

Annamma Johns
Buddhism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Remington Johnson
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Maggie Johnson
United Methodist Church
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
TX

Mark Johnson
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
AL

Sheree Jones
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Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Betsy Kammerdiener
Baptist
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TN

Anna Kendig Flores
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Justice Chaplain
MN

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Healthcare, Hospice, Private Chaplain
TX

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MS

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TX

Mary Klaehn
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AZ

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IA

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Education Chaplain
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Sue Krayner
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Chelsea May LaRue
Humanism
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MI

James Lavoy
Other
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
PA

Doug Laws
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Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Stacy Lawton
Baptist
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SC

Chelsea Leitcher
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Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
CA

Stephen Lemons
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Healthcare Chaplain
SC

Linda Lewis
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NC

Carmen Lile-Henley
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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
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TX

Deborah Lynn
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TN

Karen MacDonald
United Church of Christ
Hospice Chaplain
AZ

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MN

Michael Maness
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Correctional and Rehabilitation Chaplain
TX

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Mary Martin
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Irene Martinez
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FL

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Other
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WV

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TX

Lynn McLaughlin
Baptist
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Ryan Mulkowsky
Humanism
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GA

Barb McRae
Presbyterian Church (USA)
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MI

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KS

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GA

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Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

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TX

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Twyla Nelson
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Karl Netting
United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
VA

Karl Netting
United Methodist Church
Healthcare, Hospice
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Larry Payne
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
TX

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

Kate Perry
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
ME

Ric Olsen
Baptist
Public Safety Chaplain
CA

Erin Phelps
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KY

Donna Olsen
Non-Denominational
Private Chaplain
ND

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United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
FL

Christopher O'Rear
Baptist
Mental Health Chaplain
TN

Ebby Picou
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Healthcare, Correctional and Rehabilitation
NY

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United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

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United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
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NJ

Megan Pike
Cooperative Baptist
Healthcare
WI

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OK

Claire Richardson
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Hospice Chaplain
TX

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Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

James Pope
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military Chaplain
FL

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Hospice Chaplain
SC

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Healthcare, Veterans Affairs Chaplain
MI

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NH

Kenneth Ramsey
Baptist
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TX

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CT

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SC

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WI

Pastor Tom Schwolert
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Adolescent Mental Health
TX

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NJ

Taylor Smith
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Healthcare Chaplain
GA

Rachel Gunter Shapard
Baptist
Hospice
FL

Melissa Snarr
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TN

Katrina Shawgo
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Hospice Chaplain
TX

Lynne Spencer
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

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Private Chaplain
NH

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Correctional and Rehabilitation, Education
Chaplain
NC

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Healthcare Chaplain
AL

Jon Spoolman
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Education, Private
CA

Leslie Smith
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Tom Stephenson
United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Mark Smith
Reformed Church in America
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NJ

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

Ben Stewart
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Seafarers Chaplain
KY

Eileen Stone
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
FL

Valerie Storms
Other
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FL

Bert Strange
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Military, Hospice, Education Chaplain
SC

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

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

Lauri Swann
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Healthcare, Psychiatric Chaplain
DC

Don Tastad
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
MN

Jamez Terry
Other
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AK

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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Disabilities and Special Needs Chaplain
SC

Michele Thompson
Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Meriah Tigner
Baptist
Private Chaplain
IN

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
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IL

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Healthcare Chaplain
OK

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

Clyde Waters
Baptist
Public Safety Chaplain
SC

William von Dohlen
Baptist
Military Chaplain
TN

David Watson
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
OR

Cecelia Walker
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
AL

Rev. Mary Lewis Webb
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Healthcare, Veterans Affairs Chaplain
VT

Kurt Walker
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
OH

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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Military, Hospice Chaplain
KY

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Unitarian Universalism
Civic Chaplain
TX

Amanda Wertz
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Todd Walter
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
SC

Erica Whitaker
Baptist
Private
KY

Willim Ware
Unitarian Universalism
Private Chaplain
OR

Lawrence Whitney
Other
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MA

Nancy Wiener
Judaism
Jewish Chaplain
NY

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

Dennis Wienk
Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NY

Rev. Kelley Woggon
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KY

Linda Wilkerson
Baptist
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Paula Womack
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Carol Wilkinson
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
NC

Christy Wood
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Hospice Chaplain
TX

Ben Williams
Church of the Nazarene
Healthcare Chaplain
OH

John Woodruff
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
MN

Justin Williamson
Baptist
Hospice
NC

Ellen Woodruff
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Healthcare Chaplain
MN

Courtney Wilson
Unitarian Universalism
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Laura Woods
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
OK

Danette Windsor
Humanism
Healthcare, Hospice, Private Chaplain
TX

George Worthington
Humanism
Private Chaplain
TX

Darrel Wrider
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Healthcare Chaplain
IA

James Wright
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Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
TX

Alan Wright
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Rev. Mike Wright-Chapman
United Church of Christ
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Sejana Yoo
Baptist
Healthcare
TX

Donna Zuroweste
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Healthcare, Public Safety, Private Chaplain
MO