

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

Sarah Galo
Episcopal Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NJ

Francisco Gamez
Humanism
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

David Gladson
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
GA

Alicia Gomes
Episcopal Church
Parochial School Chaplain
FL

R. Mark Grace
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Lauren Greenwade
Episcopal Church
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

Dorie Griggs
Non-Denominational
Healthcare, Public Safety Chaplain
GA

Olen Grubbs
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Healthcare Chaplain
TN

Christine Haider-Winnett
Roman Catholic
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
CA

Lisa Hair
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Education Chaplain
PA

Marion Hamermesh
Other
Hospice Chaplain
DE

Kirsten Hancock
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
TX

James Harper
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
KS

Brenda Harris
Other
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Elizabeth Harris-Lamkin
Baptist
Military, Healthcare Chaplain
NC

Arden Heath
Non-Denominational
Healthcare Chaplain
WI

Cynthia Henderson
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Private Chaplain
NC

Erin Hensley
Episcopal Church
Hospice Chaplain
TX

Britt Hicks
United Church of Christ
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Tami Higdon
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
FL

Maurice Himson
Baptist
Hospice Chaplain
SC

Dean Hokel
United Church of Christ
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
AZ

Carrie Holley-Hurt
Unitarian Universalism
Social Movement Chaplain
TX

Daniel Horwitz
Judaism
Private Chaplain
TX

David Howard
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
NC

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

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

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
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 Krayner
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lisa D. Schoenwetter
United Church of Christ
Retired Chaplain
WI

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

Leslie Smith
United Methodist Church
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Mark Smith
Reformed Church in America
Healthcare, Hospice Chaplain
NJ

Lynne Spencer
Baptist
Healthcare Chaplain
TX

Tom Stephenson
United Methodist Church
Hospice Chaplain
TX

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
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 Wridler
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