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Joint Statement by the Council on Foundations, Independent Sector, National Council of Nonprofits, and United Philanthropy Forum on Threats to Civil Society and the Independence of the Charitable Sector



On behalf of the charitable sector, we oppose the Trump administration’s stated intention to target Harvard University on ideological grounds — and we remind the Internal Revenue Service of its vital role as an independent agency, one that must carry out its responsibilities free from political pressure or influence.

President Trump has suggested that Harvard University be stripped of its tax-exempt status, and the IRS is reportedly looking into doing so. While the immediate

focus may appear to be a single academic institution, the implications of such threats and actions reach far beyond campus walls — striking at the very heart of American civil society.

Since the nation's founding, the United States has aspired to be a place where ideas and information can flourish free from government interference.

This moment is about more than one institution. It is about how thought, knowledge and expression are essential to our freedom and to our national identity, and must be protected.

Civil society — and the charitable nonprofit sector that gives it form and voice — must remain independent of government influence. A robust civil society cannot survive when political leaders decide which institutions deserve protections based on ideology or political convenience.

Our democracy depends on a strong, vibrant and independent civil society. Undermining it — for any reason, by any leader — is a threat we cannot and will not ignore.