

April 15, 2017  
235A Pine St, Amherst MA 01002

Dear Members of the AFSC National Board:

I writing in response to the news that AFSC national office plans to cut and close numerous local AFSC offices and programs across the country in response to their fiscal crisis and as part of a change in organizational philosophy. I believe this action will result in harm to the communities and causes that AFSC has long served and which need your attention more, now than ever at this critical and dangerous time. Grass-roots organizing, anti-war activism, empowerment of local communities— these are your trademarks and your strength. I urge you to read closely and take seriously, as required in your contract with AFSC staff, the **Northeast Union Statement and Alternative Proposal** (attached) which offers practical options to avoid the great harm that will be done if you vote to approve the cuts proposed by the General Secretary at your upcoming board meeting.

I am a member of Mt Toby Friends Meeting in Leverett, MA, which has been a strong supporter of the Western MA AFSC program over its 49 year history. We are shocked at the proposed closing of this program, which is an anchor of collaborative progressive activism in our region. Prior to your 2012 policy change that withdrew the right of local offices to raise funds, this program was very successful in local fundraising and used that process to strengthen its connection to stakeholders and supporters in the region. The fiscal crisis that is precipitating your proposed cuts is one that the national board should have been well aware of years ago and could have averted; its remedy is not to be found in cutting local programs and further weakening your grass-roots base.

Frankly I am baffled that AFSC is stepping away from its long and successful history of grass roots organizing to become a big-donor and grant-supported, top-down, centralized, authoritarian organization. I do not understand the lack of response and respect for local and regional input from staff and regional boards that appears to have characterized your process of re-defining AFSC over the past 5 years. This new identity that you seem to be creating is not the AFSC that I have chosen to support with my dollars; you will surely lose my trust and my donations. It is sad and strange to see the celebratory stories of AFSC's 100 years come out in Friends Journal just as our historically strong and active local office – and other vitally important programs across the Northeast and the nation – are being abruptly and heartlessly dismantled.

I am sending this letter to each of the members of the AFSC National Board. I urge you to look deeply at your choices and to listen to the voices of those who work close to the ground in local offices around the country. This is the heart and soul of AFSC. Thank you for your careful discernment and deep listening, and your willingness to respond with integrity and faithfulness.

Sincerely,

Ruth Hazzard  
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