GENERAL

Update on GoFundMe Controversy: State Charity Regulators Demand Answers and Action

03.06.26 | Linda J. Rosenthal, JD

"It's a news story that should have been uncovered months ago, but perhaps everyone was too distracted and overwhelmed by the daily chaos from Washington, D.C."

That was the opening sentence in *Another Headache for America's Charities* (October 22, 2025, updated October 23, 2025) *FPLG Blog.* In the middle of October 2025, a huge scandal affecting the nation's charitable nonprofits spilled out into the open, at first through the efforts of diligent local "troubleshooter" reporters responding to public inquiries as well as from nonprofit consultants who were receiving frantic phone calls from their clients. See, for example: *GoFundMe created 1.4M donation pages for nonprofits; some Bay Area organizations had no clue* (October 15, 2025, 5:51 pm PDT) Stephanie Sierra, abc7news.com (San Bruno, CA); and *1.4 Million Donation Pages without Permission created by GoFundMe* (October 17, 2025, updated October 21st and October 23rd, 2025) George Weiner, Founder, Whole Whale, *nonprofitnewsfeed.com*.

GoFundMe representatives acknowledged that "for some time," the mega-platform had "created its own donation web pages for 1.4 million charities located in the United States, without first asking those charities for permission." See *GoFundMe Multistate Letter*, [7 pp. PDF] dated March 3, 2026, from 22 state regulators to GoFundMe's general counsel, Kim Wilford.

Moreover, "based on public reports," government officials "understand that GoFundMe generated these pages without the prior knowledge or consent of the referenced charities, and these charities, upon discovering the GoFundMe pages, were deeply troubled that the pages were set up in their names without their knowledge."

As we described in *Another Headache for America's Charities*, the organized charitable nonprofit community, led by the National Association of Nonprofit's Diane Yentel, demanded that GoFundMe

(1) stop doing this) and (2) clean up the mess they had created.

In particular, the article by Whole Whale's George Weiner explains clearly the nature of this "mess" including deep trouble with conflicting SEO rankings – i.e., the existing 501(c)(3)'s fundraising appeals on their own website vs. the new and unauthorized GoFundMe-created sites.

There is also the troubling matter of the special and extra transaction fees imposed (unilaterally) by GoFundMe.

GoFundMe apologized and promised to immediately reverse and remove any unauthorized links and material, see e.g.: *Nonprofit Pages: We listened and made changes* (October 23, 2025) GoFundMe Pro; and *GoFundMe takes responsibility for creating pages without nonprofits' consent: 'We're very sorry'* (October 28, 2025) Stephanie Sierra, *ABC 7*.

However, many 501(c)(3)s continued to experience problems over the next several months.

State Officials Want Answers

In *GoFundMe Multistate Letter*, [7 pp. PDF] (March 3, 2026), a coalition of state charity regulators demanded action and answers within 14 days.

They explained: "The charities whose identities were taken by GoFundMe were unable to control their fundraising and brand. The unauthorized pages also created donor confusion, deception, distrust, and conflicting messaging."

Additionally, GoFundMe's creation of these websites led to the following….

- "Inaccurate Charity Information;
- Disclosure about Donor-Advised Fund (DAF) Structure;
- Impression of Charity Affiliation; and
- Default Tip and Search Engine Optimization"

"These practices could violate numerous state charitable solicitation and consumer protection laws, including but not limited to:"

- "Lack of Required Consent;
- Deceptive or Misleading Conduct; and
- Insufficient or Omitted Disclosures"

"These considerations are neither exhaustive nor determinative." In each category, the state officials include citations to the individual states' statutes to which this conduct refers.

Demands for Correction

In the "Demand for Corrective Action," the state attorneys general and top charity regulators specified that "GoFundMe immediately confirm that the following remedial measures have been taken:

- Provide proof that GoFundMe has removed all unauthorized donation web pages and is requiring prior consent for charity donation web pages.

- Demonstrate the takedown procedures implemented to remove unauthorized donation pages without action by the charity.
- Explain how GoFundMe has modified its SEO practices to ensure charities' own fundraising campaigns or websites are not disadvantaged."

They "further demand" that "GoFundMe undertake a comprehensive review of relevant policies and procedures, and implement the following additional remedial measures immediately:

- "Prominently disclose all material information that would reasonably affect a person's decision to donate, including: the legal recipient of the donation; the role and nature of any DAF sponsor; and any fees, tips, or other amounts added to or deducted from donor contributions.
- Ensure any fundraising or donation web page, campaign, or solicitation does not imply that GoFundMe is the intended charity, is operating on behalf of the charity, or has any affiliation if one does not exist.
- Review whether 'tips' or analogous charges collected by GoFundMe should be redirected to the charities."

Conclusion

The response is due "no later than 14 days from the date of this letter. Investigative requests from interested States are also forthcoming."

The requesting state attorneys general and charitable regulators (collectively, the "States")" are from: California; Delaware; Kentucky; Illinois Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

This demand letter, like others from coalitions of state regulators, has gone out on the letterhead of each state official. However, the lead in this case is the Attorney General of Pennsylvania, David W. Sunday, Jr.

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