

Testimony for **HJ0002**
Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine
Position: **FAV**

Dear Chair Healey and members of the Rules & Executive Nominations Committee,

My name is Ethan Eblaghie and I am a former student member of the Baltimore City School Board and co-founder of the Baltimore Student Union, the largest grassroots student organization in Baltimore. BSU represents over 100 high school students in Baltimore and urgently supports an enduring ceasefire to prevent the humanitarian disaster and ethnic cleansing currently unfolding in Gaza.

On January 7, I spoke at a rally on the Lawyer's Mall outside of this House urgently demanding that the General Assembly take up a resolution for a ceasefire. Two months later, I stand by those words, and rather than be overly verbose, I will quote them here.

“Gaza’s graduating class of 2024 will never get to walk across the stage as innumerable high school seniors my own age have been martyred. While thousands of miles away, this violence has every relevance to Baltimore students, from our Arab and Muslim classmates, who see their people killed on our dime, to our Jewish classmates, who see a campaign of genocide wrongfully carried out in their name, and the many students of conscience, who are united with those protesting in our thousands and in our millions for the American establishment to respect the basic humanity of the Palestinian people.”

As local elected officials, it would be easy for the members of this Committee to conclude that a war-torn, occupied piece of territory on the other side of the globe is not germane to the proceedings of the State House. However, as our representatives on this legislative body, it is your duty to call out suffering wherever you see it, and your civic responsibility to defend the security and humanity of your constituents, regardless of what language they speak, faith they practice, or nation they come from.

It is also your responsibility as leaders to take ownership of decisions you and past iterations of this legislative body have made. Millions in our state’s tax dollars goes to economic and military support for the Israeli government. Through municipal and state contracts like ShotSpotter and deadly exchange between the Israeli Defense Forces and local police departments, Maryland’s institutions are deeply intertwined with institutions abroad in close proximity to this carnage. This may be an international issue, but this is a local issue, too, and Maryland must act.

We ask that you return a favorable report on HJ0002 and urge your colleagues in the full House of Delegates to pass this resolution.