



March 4, 2024

Chair Del. Anne Healey
Maryland House of Delegates
Rules and Executive Nominations Committee

Re: Testimony **IN FAVOR OF House Joint Resolution 2 (HJ0002)**, Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine

Hon. Committee Members:

My name is Cassidy Kristal-Cohen and I am a resident of Legislative District 40. I thank you for this opportunity to **testify in favor of House Joint Resolution 2** calling for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine. As a member of **Jewish Voice for Peace**, I stand with millions crying out worldwide to end the relentless humanitarian catastrophe that has already claimed over 30,000 Palestinian lives.

The Israeli military offensive has brought devastating and disproportionate suffering to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank – over 10,000 children killed, nearly half of all homes damaged or razed to the ground. The health system is decimated due to Israel’s bombing campaign on hospitals. Palestinians in Gaza are being denied basics for life like water, food, and electricity. Leading human rights groups have accused Israel of using starvation as a deliberate war tactic. The Israeli military has killed 85 Palestinian journalists thus far.

As a U.S. taxpayer I am appalled that over \$3 billion of our money funds the weapons committing these atrocities each year. Nearly \$80 million comes just from Maryland. We must condemn this complicity and immediately cease providing arms and funding until the bloodshed ends. According to recent polling, most people in the U.S. – including a majority of the Jewish population – want the U.S. to stop backing the current horrors. As a Jew, my faith teaches that every life is precious – Palestinian children and their grieving parents no less.

We need an immediate ceasefire to save lives NOW. Food, aid, and empathy should flow freely to suffering people in Palestine, not bombs. This resolution sends that message loudly to our federal government. But bandages will not heal wounds this deep. We must address root injustices enabling the violence – decades of occupation, dispossession and dehumanization of Palestinians. I dream of a day when no human lives under apartheid, when empathy and equality blossom everywhere.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HJ0002. The growing movement for Palestinian rights will only swell until freedom comes. I implore you to vote on the right side of history – and with the will of your constituents – and pass this bill to save precious lives hanging in the balance.

Sincerely,

Cassidy Kristal-Cohen

