



HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

MARCH 6, 2024

HOUSE BILL 1124

CIVIL ACTIONS - NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS - UNAUTHORIZED SUPPORT OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY (NOT ON OUR DIME ACT)

OPPOSE

Agudath Israel of Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic regional office for Agudath Israel of America – a renowned national Jewish advocacy organization with chapters across the country, speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland. Thousands of the members of our community have visited Israel, have lived in Israel, and/or have family members who live in Israel, and we speak on their behalf as well.

House Bill 1124 seeks to penalize nonprofit organizations if they engage in aiding or abetting certain activity by the government of Israel or a citizen of Israel relating to Israeli settlements. Jews lived in the West Bank, also known as Judea and Samaria, for thousands of years, and many of Judaism's holiest sites are located there. After the country of Jordan seized the area during the War of Israeli Independence, Jordan expelled all Jews (roughly seventeen thousand souls) from the area. Only after the Six Day War, when Israel successfully defeated a Jordanian attack and managed to expel Jordanian forces from the area, were Jews once allowed into the area. (To this day, Jews are unable to reside in areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority.) Included in this area is much of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, which are considered the holiest place on Earth in the Jewish tradition.

House Bill 1124 is merely another attempt to continue to unfairly demonize Israel. House Bill 1124 assumes that Israelis should not be allowed to establish residence in some of Judaism's most holy places, and nonprofits supporting a Jewish presence in areas such as the Western Wall (!) should be punished. We urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 1124. Thank you.