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 Temple Beth Shalom
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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Joint Resolution 5 - Commitment to Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and Open Public Discourse

Rules and Executive Nominations Committee

March 11, 2024

OPPOSE

Background: House Joint Resolution 5 (HJ5) pretends that it is a resolution to protect free speech, academic freedom, and open public discourse. However, it is simply yet another piece of legislation this year targeting the only Jewish state in the world. This resolution lists one foreign government, Israel, by stating, "That the General Assembly of Maryland opposes any efforts to infringe on the constitutionally protected right to criticize foreign governments, including the State of Israel...". There are already laws in place that protect against free speech, academic freedom, and open public discourse. This resolution is not only unnecessary, but the explicit inclusion of only Israel among all of the nations in the world makes clear its actual intent.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, all of its agencies, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Greater Baltimore. We are adamantly opposed to this resolution which targets the only Jewish State. Why is Israel the only country listed by name? There are dozens of foreign governments whose policies Marylanders may not agree with, and citizens are free to criticize, but the resolution's goal is to call out the only democracy in the Middle East and the homeland of the Jewish people.

Many may disagree with certain policies of any foreign government, and they are free and open to speak against those policies. By only naming Israel, the true objective of this unnecessary resolution is clear, to target the Jewish state.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on HJ5.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

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