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To Whom It May Concern,

I am a Jewish Marylander writing to strongly urge you to support HB 1460. This bill protects the crucial right to boycott, a key tactic in nonviolent campaigns against injustice. It does so by overturning an Executive Order (EO) that limits the ability to participate in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against the State of Israel.

Political boycotts are a First Amendment-protected right that the EO clearly violates. It willfully misstates the fundamental purpose and rationale for BDS in order to limit protected political speech and it misrepresents the BDS movement when it asserts that those participating in a boycott of Israel are engaging in antisemitic discrimination “because of [a person or entity’s] Israeli national origin, or residence or incorporation in Israel and its territories.” In reality, the stated aims of the BDS movement are to force change to the Israeli government’s discriminatory policies towards Palestinians and occupation of Palestinian land. As such, they should be considered protected based on the Supreme Court ruling stating that “boycotts to ‘bring about political, social, and economic change’ are a form of political speech.”

Anti-BDS laws set a dangerous precedent for restricting free speech on other issues. For instance, bills have been introduced to prohibit shareholders from voting based on environmental, social, or governance criteria and to prevent governments from contracting with entities that “discriminate” against the firearm and ammunition industries or that boycott oil, gas, mining, or energy production companies. Many Jewish Marylanders are committed to participating in the BDS movement. **It is not the place of the government to decide the right way to be Jewish.**

Regardless of one's views on the BDS movement, Maryland must not enable further attacks on protected political speech by allowing this EO to stand. Bills to put these restrictions in place in Maryland failed to pass the legislature, leading to Governor Hogan's Executive Order. This indicates that these restrictions are not the will of the people, and our laws should reflect that.

Thank you for taking the time to hear these concerns. Please do everything you can to ensure the passing of HB 1460.

Sincerely,

Samuel Kane