

HB1460

March 7th, 2025

Health and Government Operations Committee
101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Re: Testimony SUPPORTING HB1460

Dear Chairperson Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk and the members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Mary Ella Jourdak. I am writing to express my strong support of HB1460, the Boycott of Foreign Countries bill. I am a second generation business owner in the state of Maryland. My name is on my business, and so are my morals - I openly discuss and list which organizations I donate money or time to, and what causes I am aligned with so that my clients may also easily distinguish whether or not they want to work together. I firmly believe that where you spend your money, or where you don't, is a fundamental part of being a civically minded individual.

And I'm not alone in that thinking. The first amendment right upholds yours, mine, and our ability to engage in free speech, as do rulings from the Supreme Court. In fact, the Supreme Court ruled that boycotting is "the highest rung on the hierarchy of first amendment values" in the case NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co., 1982.

While I am eligible to work on various state contracts, I find it deeply concerning that the way I operate my business, specifically the fact that I engage in free and protected political speech, is limited because of Executive Order 01.01.2017.25. I find it to be morally unscrupulous to support businesses, organizations, and individuals that profit from or engage in apartheid, ethnic cleansing, displacement, genocide, or myriad other war crimes (both proven and under investigation, see source), and could not, in good conscience, sign a loyalty oath to Israel on behalf of my business.

Furthermore, irregardless to whether or not a business owner has a moral stake in speaking out against a foreign country, the state of Maryland is compelling the speech of these entities under the penalty of perjury.

This is a contemptible and unjust practice for our state to engage in. In effect, the existing executive order allows the state to boycott boycotters, for the state to take part in political action against citizens exercising their first amendment rights. And frankly, I

find it egregious that this law impacting all of Maryland's citizens was passed by an executive order in the first place.

Boycotting has and will continue to be an effective and non-violent way for both businesses and individuals to engage with the wider world, and it is past time that Maryland upholds both the Supreme Court's rulings, as well as the fundamental law of the land through our precious first amendment. As such I would ask that the committee please find a favorable report for HB1460.

Sincerely,

Mary Ella Jourdak

Source:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/10/un-commission-finds-war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-israeli-attacks>