

March 5, 2025

Chair Luke Clippinger
Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Luke Clippinger and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Justin Li and I am a District 17 constituent living in Rockville. I am writing to urge the House Judiciary Committee to adopt House Bill 1394, Not On Our Dime Act. This legislation is a vital step toward ensuring that Maryland's nonprofit organizations cannot misuse their tax-exempt status to fund illegal Israeli settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territories. It aligns our state's values with international law, human rights, and the conscience of our communities.

Throughout last year, as a senior at University of Maryland, I mobilized with other students calling for investment transparency and accountability of the school in response to the war in Gaza. I witnessed my Palestinian classmates collapse in tears recalling receiving calls that their relatives were killed in between classes. Palestinian stories and images like this have haunted me, as I'm sure to all others who have the basic human empathy. I learned from the same students how the war carries the same colonial logic of the decades of violent settlements, and we ought to stop all the ways Maryland is still materially funneling it.

Recent reports from the United Nations confirm that Israel's settlement operations have reached a devastating tipping point. In January 2025, a military offensive displacing 40,000 Palestinians in the West Bank destroyed critical infrastructure—water systems, homes, even animal shelters—and rendered entire refugee camps “uninhabitable.” These actions, part of Operation Iron Wall, echo the brutality of past military campaigns, violating the Geneva Conventions through forced transfer, collective punishment, and the systematic annexation of land. This is not an isolated incident. For decades, illegal settlements have displaced Palestinians and carved their homeland into fragmented “bantustans”. Over 700,000 settlers now occupy stolen land, enabled by violence, discriminatory laws, and the complicity of external actors.

Tax-exempt organizations in the U.S. can play a direct role in this crisis. US synagogues have hosted real estate fairs for groups like My Home in Israel, which market West Bank settlements, promoting properties built on land seized through ethnic cleansing. Nonprofits shouldn't be able to exploit charitable registries to subsidize war crimes, all while enjoying public trust and tax benefits, and this bill provides a mechanism for the state to act decisively on this principle.

When I marched with my classmates to divest from genocide-profitteers last year, my Jewish friends—who once found solace in cultural spaces—were forced to host private Shabbat dinners due to their opposition to the war. Some of their communal institutions have become political

battlegrounds, even diverting money and resources to rally people to organize against the student movement for Palestine.

This is the hypocrisy HB 1394 confronts: nonprofits masquerading as charitable entities while facilitating the violation of international human rights. They claim to serve “cultural” or “religious” missions, but one way or another, their dollars fund bulldozers that erase Palestinian villages, sniper towers that surveil families, and laws that bar UNRWA from delivering food to starving children.

Please pass HB 1394; declare that not one more dollar from our state will fuel more Israeli settlements. The Palestinian child drinking sewage-contaminated water in Jenin, the Jewish student ostracized by politicized communal spaces, and the Maryland taxpayers unwittingly funding this horror demand nothing less.

Thank you,

Justin Li
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