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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1394**  
**Civil Actions - Nonprofit Organizations - Unauthorized Support of Israeli Settlement**  
**Activity (Not on Our Dime Act)**  
*Judiciary Committee*  
**March 5, 2025**

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 1394**, which will prohibit nonprofit organizations in Maryland from engaging in or supporting activities that contribute to Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and which are banned under the Geneva Conventions. If a nonprofit is found in violation, the Maryland Secretary of State is mandated to remove it from the state's Registry of Charitable Solicitation. The bill outlines prohibited actions, such as facilitating the movement of Israeli civilians into these areas, engaging in violence against protected persons, annexing Palestinian land, damaging property, or obstructing access to vital resources by the Israeli government or citizens. In the event of a violation, the Maryland Attorney General or an affected party may pursue legal action against the nonprofit, seeking damages and attorney's fees. **This bill provides a crucial avenue for legal recourse to those harmed by illegal Israeli land annexation and settler violence in the West Bank.**

**As social workers in the state of Maryland, we are committed to upholding the core values of our vocation, including social justice and human dignity.** These principles compel us to oppose actions that perpetuate inequality, displacement, and harm to vulnerable communities. Thus, we believe it is our ethical responsibility to advocate in favor of this bill.

**Nonprofit organizations in Maryland mustn't support activities that violate international law, as such actions undermine global efforts to promote peace, justice, and human rights.** The UN General Assembly, in a September 2024 resolution, urged states to refrain from recognizing or supporting Israel's unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,<sup>1</sup> echoing the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) advisory opinion that declared the Occupation illegal.<sup>2</sup> Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violate international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and contribute to the displacement of Palestinian communities, land

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<sup>1</sup> Mishra, V. (2024, September 18). UN General Assembly demands Israel end 'unlawful presence' in Occupied Palestinian Territory. United Nations. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/09/1154496>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). (2024, September 13). Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UN Doc A/ES-10/L.31/Rev.1. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/ES-10/L.31/Rev.1>

confiscation, and denial of basic rights.<sup>3</sup> By prohibiting Maryland-based nonprofits from enabling these activities, this bill ensures the state is not complicit in violations of international law and aligns with global calls for accountability and justice.

**Passing this bill would create a meaningful avenue for individuals and communities harmed by illegal Israeli settlements to seek justice and compensation when these settlements are funded or supported by nonprofits in Maryland.** Illegal settlements have caused significant harm to Palestinian families and communities, both material<sup>4</sup> and psychological.<sup>5</sup> By allowing affected individuals to bring legal action against nonprofits that fund illegal settlements, the bill empowers those who have suffered to hold accountable the organizations enabling these injustices. This not only offers a measure of redress for victims but also reinforces Maryland's commitment to upholding human rights, accountability, and the rule of law on a global scale.

**Maryland nonprofits enjoy tax exemptions designed to benefit the public, not to fund or enable actions that contribute to human rights abuses or illegal occupations.** By barring nonprofits from financially supporting Israeli settlement activities, this bill ensures that tax benefits are not inadvertently used to sustain practices deemed unlawful by international authorities, including the United Nations and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This measure strengthens accountability and guarantees that tax-exempt status is granted only to organizations that uphold charitable principles.

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 1394.**

*Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.*

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<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International. (2019, January 30). Israeli settlements and international law. Destination: Occupation. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/01/chapter-3-israeli-settlements-and-international-law/>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The humanitarian impact of Israeli settlement activities. [https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/israeli\\_settlement\\_activities.pdf](https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/israeli_settlement_activities.pdf); Reevell, P. & Davies, G. (2023, December 19). Palestinians flee villages as settler violence surges in West Bank amid war. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/palestinians-flee-villages-settler-violence-surges-west-bank/story?id=105579013>

<sup>5</sup> Bosqui, T., et al. (2024). Psychological and social suffering of another generation of Palestinian children living under occupation: An urgent call to advocate. <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2024/05/24/psychological-and-social-suffering-of-another-generation-of-palestinian-children-living-under-occupation-an-urgent-call-to-advocate/>