

Dear Honorable Chair Barnes, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Philip Ateto and I am a lifelong Marylander, currently residing in Annapolis, in Anne Arundel County. I am writing in support of support of **HB 1455 – State Retirement and Pension System - Divestment From Israel**

I am writing because it is unacceptable for our state to be financially supporting and collaborating with a country that is an apartheid state, assisting in land theft and illegal settlements and acts of aggression that violate the Geneva Convention.

I support **HB 1455** because for far too long the state of Israel has been receiving financial support from our country on all levels of government in violation of U.S. laws while continually openly violating international law, operating as an apartheid state, and giving away land that is not theirs as found by the United Nations. As a country that was founded on land theft, we should know better than to not only allow this to happen, but also actively assist the country that is perpetrating these injustices.

Since its inception the state of Israel has been given cover to commit whatever injustices and atrocities they wish in violation of international law and with the support of our government, with impunity and without any accountability. and it is inconceivable and unacceptable for our great state to continue to be one of the municipalities doing this.

Additionally, investing the retirement funds of state employees in the state of Israel violates the fiduciary responsibility of the state, as Israel's economy is collapsing in light of its actions the past few years and it is well on its way to being a pariah state, and these investments are destined to dramatically lose value.

It seems the tides are finally turning on public sentiment toward Israel's illegal and inhumane actions in Palestine and it is past time for us to get on the right side of history. The United States was one of the last countries still supporting apartheid South Africa, do we want to be the last hold outs supporting such egregious crimes against humanity again?

Now more than ever it is important for governments, people, and organizations to speak up about the atrocities committed by Israel in Palestine and to vote with our dollars by withholding financial and other support. It is the equivalent of defending and protecting South African apartheid in the 80s, which unfortunately this country did and it remains one of many scars on the moral fabric of this country.

For these reasons and many more, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB 1455**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

For these reasons and many more, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB 1184**.