

HB1455 RichardKaplowitz_UNF

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz Frederick,
MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#1455- POSITION: UNFAVORABLE
State Retirement and Pension System - Divestment From Israel

TO: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to HB#1455, **State Retirement and Pension System - Divestment From Israel**

This bill attempts to make Maryland a part of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction movement against Israel over their actions in the Gaza and Iran Wars.

As explained by the American Jewish Committee when the BDS movement began in 2022 there are *Five 2022 Failures of the BDS Movement*¹

It's been a rough year so far for the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Nearly two decades after its founding, the campaign has suffered a string of stinging defeats in its attempt to rally world support to single out the world's only Jewish state. Organized by the Palestinian-led BDS National Committee (BNC), the movement along with its affiliates and global supporters regularly target corporations, governments, NGOs, and even celebrities such as artists and musicians to cut ties with Israel over its policies toward the Palestinians.

BDS markets itself as a non-violent movement to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel to get it to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders. However, while some may sincerely want peace and support human rights [BDS leadership in fact seeks nothing less than the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state](#). Despite its stated aims, [American Jewish Committee \(AJC\) has found that](#) large majorities of both American Jews and the general public said that the BDS movement has at least some antisemitic elements, with 82% of American Jews saying it either is mostly antisemitic or has antisemitic supporters and 66% of the general public saying the same.

This bill attempts to enroll Maryland in this movement disregarding the fiduciary responsibilities of Maryland agencies and their ability to make investments that benefit Maryland. It is a misguided attempt to have Maryland take a political position on how and where and with whom they place investments. I personally condemn the actions of the Israeli government but support the people of Israel and a Jewish state. I trust our agencies to make their decisions free from political influence on financial grounds.

This bill tries to create BDS as state policy by requiring the Board of Trustees for the State Retirement and Pension System to review certain investment holdings; requiring the Board of Trustees to take certain divestment actions with regard to certain Israeli investments; prohibiting the Board of Trustees from making certain new investments; providing certain immunities from liability for certain persons; requiring the Board of Trustees to act in good faith in taking certain actions in a certain manner; etc

I respectfully urge this committee to return an unfavorable report on HB#1455.

¹ <https://www.ajc.org/news/five-2022-failures-of-the-bds-movement>