



TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1455 – FAVORABLE

State Retirement and Pension System – Divestment from Israel

House Appropriations Committee, March 19, 2026 Hearing

Miriam Ruttenberg
Silver Spring, MD

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Miriam Ruttenberg, and I am a resident of Maryland District 20. I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Jewish Collective (MCJC), an organization committed to collective liberation as the cornerstone of a vibrant, safe, and supportive Jewish community and a safe and equitable county and state for all. This includes our Palestinian neighbors, with whom we grieve as we watch the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System help fund the ongoing Israeli genocide, forced displacement and violence against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank with its investment of over \$65 million in Israeli sovereign bonds.

MCJC was founded in response to the genocide in Gaza by a group of Jewish-identifying residents of Montgomery County, sharing sadness and anger at the failure of our local Jewish community to recognize the value of Palestinian lives. We believe that Jewish safety and wellbeing are interlinked with the safety of all marginalized and oppressed communities. Our members are critical of the state of Israel because of its historical and present subjugation of, and violence towards, Palestinians. These critical voices now reflect a majority among American Jews (see this Washington Post [poll](#) that recently found that 61% of U.S. Jews believe that Israel is committing war crimes). Here in Maryland over 600 Jews recently signed [a letter](#) defending Senator Chris Van Hollen's right to criticize Israel.

MCJC strongly urges this Committee's support for HB1455 for a few important reasons. First, these bonds are investing in oppression and destruction, in contravention of our vision of shared humanity, and in conflict with the pension system's [public commitments to socially responsible investing](#) and the protection of human rights. Second, these bonds carry significant financial risk, having received a downgraded credit rating by the three top global credit rating agencies since October 7, 2023. The pension funds divested from Israeli sovereign bonds can be redirected to less risky and more humane investments. Third, as a community of Jewish-identifying Marylanders that includes parents, educators, and other state employees, we want our tax dollars to be invested in the community for the benefit of all Marylanders. We specifically reject the idea that these investments are being made in our name, for our own safety. We know the illegal and brutal behavior of the Israel government does not make Jews safe, either in Israel or here in Maryland.

Finally, we are not asking you to single out Israel for divestment. The Maryland General Assembly previously voted to divest from other foreign governments that violated international human rights laws, including South Africa (1984), Sudan and Iran (2008), and Russia (2022). As in these cases, it is possible for the Assembly to act in a way that is both fiscally responsible and humane.

We ask that you move this bill forward by issuing a favorable report on HB1455.

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Our Mission, Vision, and Values Statement [here](#)