

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I urge the House Appropriations Committee to **issue a favorable report on House Bill 1455.**

I am a Jewish, and it's a misconception that all Jews support Israel, or want to fund it. Israel's war crimes do not make Jews here or anywhere else safer, **and would not be possible without US support.** Despite being Jewish, I don't have any control over Israel. I'm here in America, where in theory my democratic voice counts. What we have control over is **stop giving unrestricted loans to Israel to buy weapons.** That's what an Israeli bond is, an unrestricted loan they can use for whatever they want. **It's time to stop investing our state's retirement funds in weapons used to violate human rights and commit war crimes.** Like we have done before for Russia, South Africa, and others.

Maryland's State Retirement and Pension System holds \$65.5 million of investments in Israeli bonds as of Dec. 2024. These unconditional loans to the Israeli treasury provide critical financial support for Israel's continued forced displacement, starvation, and bombings in Gaza, as well as surging Israeli settler attacks, illegal settlement construction, and military operations in the occupied West Bank.

Israel's brutal system of oppression over Palestinians directly conflicts with our pension system's public commitments to socially responsible investing, and obligations as a signatory of the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment. The pension system's own Investment Policy Manual outlines steps to protect human rights.

Not only do the pension system's Israeli sovereign bonds invest in oppression, they present significant financial risks that threaten the retirement security of the state's 420,000 public employees and retirees. The three top global credit rating agencies have downgraded Israel's credit rating since Oct. 7th, 2023, citing "the ongoing military conflict and increased geopolitical risks."

As a resident of Maryland, I want my tax dollars to be invested instead in our local communities. As Maryland lawmakers, it's also your responsibility to ensure that our state's public employees, who work hard to preserve our state's excellent quality of life, can depend upon financially sound and ethical investments on the part of our state's pension system.

**For these reasons I respectfully urge a favorable report for HB1455.**