

Ayse B Dede
7469 Fire Tower Rd
Hebron, MD 21830
betuldede@gmail.com
3/17/2026

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ayse B Dede, and I am a resident of Maryland. I am writing in strong support of HB1455, the Break the Bonds bill, which would require the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System to divest from and prohibit new investments in Israeli government bonds — commonly known as Israel Bonds — debt securities issued by the State of Israel that provide direct financing to the Israeli government.

This bill raises a straightforward and unavoidable question: Should the retirement funds of Maryland's public workers be used to help finance a government that is credibly accused of committing grave and ongoing human rights violations?

For many Maryland residents, the answer is clearly no.

Over the past months, the world has witnessed immense civilian suffering in Gaza. Hospitals and medical infrastructure have been repeatedly struck. Entire civilian populations have faced severe restrictions on access to food, water, electricity, and medicine. Humanitarian organizations have warned of catastrophic conditions and famine risk. Children and families have endured conditions that no human being should be subjected to.

These events have unfolded in plain sight, documented by journalists, humanitarian organizations, and international institutions. They are not speculation or political rhetoric. They are part of the global public record.

At the same time, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank continue to face displacement, land confiscation, and violence associated with settlement expansion. Multiple major human rights organizations have concluded that the system governing Palestinians constitutes apartheid and systematic discrimination.

Against this backdrop, Maryland continues to hold Israel Bonds — financial instruments that directly finance the government responsible for these policies.

When our state pension system purchases these bonds, it is effectively loaning public money to that government. Whether intended or not, this means the retirement savings of Maryland's public workers are helping sustain the financial capacity of a government whose actions are widely condemned and associated with severe civilian harm.

That reality raises serious ethical questions that cannot simply be dismissed as routine investment policy.

This bill is not about targeting any people or religion. It is about ensuring that Maryland's public funds are not used to support or normalize grave human rights abuses.

Historically, states and institutions across the United States have recognized that public investments are not morally neutral. Divestment has long been used to ensure that public funds are not tied to governments or systems engaged in serious injustice. HB1455 follows that same principle of accountability.

For many of us, it is deeply troubling that ordinary residents must come before their own legislature to ask that public funds not be tied to such circumstances. The basic moral principle involved — that public money should not be used to finance or legitimize severe harm to civilian populations — should be self-evident.

Yet Maryland continues to hold these bonds.

Passing HB1455 would ensure that Maryland is no longer financially linked, through its public pension investments, to a government whose actions have produced widespread humanitarian devastation and global alarm.

Ultimately, this is a question of moral responsibility. When civilian suffering on such a scale is documented and visible to the world, continuing to provide financial support through government bond investments cannot be treated as business as usual.

Maryland has the ability — and the responsibility — to act.

I respectfully urge the committee and the General Assembly to pass HB1455 and ensure that Maryland's public investments reflect the basic principles of human dignity, accountability, and justice.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Ayse Betul Dede
Hebron, Maryland