

Favorable Testimony In Support of HB1455: State Retirement and Pension System – Divestment From Israel

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I urge the House Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 1455. Maryland's State Retirement and Pension System holds \$65.5 million of investments in Israeli bonds as of Dec. 2025. 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.

On a separate note, as a Jewish American I want to acknowledge the outpouring of criticism from many mainstream Jewish organizations of this legislation and other bills in this legislative session that can be characterized as "anti-Israel." Some of these organizations have conflated criticism of Israel with criticism of Jews in general, and I want to express strong disagreement with this viewpoint. Recent surveys have found that a majority of American Jews strongly disapprove of Israel's actions in Gaza¹, and do not explicitly identify as Zionists². As such, Jewish organizations that claim legislation aimed at accountability for Israel is inherently anti-Jewish are misrepresenting the communities they claim to speak for.

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

Thank you,

Samuel Kane
Jewish Resident of District 9B

1. ["Most US Jews do not identify as 'Zionists,' even when they support Israel, JFNA survey finds"](#) by Andrew Lapin, Jewish Telegraphic Agency
2. [Washington Post poll](#), October 2025