

HB 1455
Favor (FAV)
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The Southern Maryland (SoMD) Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) advocates for the labor rights of the working class in Maryland and worldwide. The working class in Southern Maryland includes over 4,000 Maryland state employees (including public school teachers) who participate in the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System (MSRPS).

Maryland State workers deserve a secure retirement. They also deserve to have their retirement contributions invested in a responsible and ethical manner. State workers must be confident their hard-earned retirement savings is building a just and equitable world, not just serving Wall Street. Indeed, the allocation of capital must reflect the social values of those who labored to save it for their future.

HB1455 would require MSRPS to divest from Israel sovereign bonds that are inherently and inextricably linked to the human rights abuses of the Israeli government. These include credible accusations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Gaza, and the illegal occupation and its horrors in the West Bank. Maryland state workers should not be forced to be complicit with these crimes because of their public service to the people of Maryland.

MSRPS will not realize materially lower returns if it excludes Israel bonds from its portfolio. Most Americans do not hold Israel's debt in their IRAs and 401(k)s, whether directly or through mutual funds.

While the focus of this bill is Israel bonds, SoMD DSA broadly supports the application of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors in the investment decisions of public pension funds. MSRPS could add international human rights concerns to its existing ESG decision frameworks. The Maryland General Assembly can facilitate those efforts with appropriate legislation, including HB 1455.