

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

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Mary Ella Jourdak, I am a resident of Annapolis, Maryland. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Anne Arundel for Palestine, a group where I am a founding member. We are a multi-faith, multi-generational group that is dedicated to helping realize Palestinian self-determination. We urge the House Appropriations Committee to please issue a favorable report on House Bill 1455.

Our state has taken the lead on legislation similar to what HB1455 requires: to take a stand against apartheid and violence by divesting from nations committing egregious human rights violations. We were the first state to divest from South Africa, and most recently held a unanimous vote to divest from Russia. As we stand on the precipice of another great violent resurgence with ongoing activity in Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, it is on our shoulders to make thoughtful choices about where our state invests money.

Anne Arundel for Palestine joins over 28 organizations in the state, and many, many more groups across the country working to divest both public and private funding from Israeli bonds. We are led by our associates at Jewish Voice for Peace, whose grassroots work has gathered these many thousands of voices in asking for investments that are not predicated upon atrocities.

We affirm that as residents of Maryland, we want our tax dollars to be invested in community building and not in destructive oppression. Your job as lawmakers is to help ensure those who work hard to ensure the future of Maryland have their own futures promised in smart, safe investments that don't contribute to death, dispossession, land and culture theft, and genocide.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report for HB1455.