

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Muzna Ansari and I am writing to you today on behalf of the Howard County Muslim Alliance, a group dedicated to civically empowering American Muslims in Howard County.

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 an American Muslim, I cannot accept that my taxes are used to directly harm and take the innocent lives of any community across the world, including Palestinians.

As lawmakers in the progressive state of Maryland, it is your responsibility to ensure that our state's public employees, who work hard to preserve our state's quality of life, can depend upon ethical investments on the part of our state's pension system.

For far too long, our elected leaders have been complacent in the face of oppression. Complacent in the face of genocide. We no longer have the luxury of these complacencies—each and every day of complacency costs lives of innocent Palestinians.

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