

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

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to you as a Jewish resident of Baltimore. My husband is a retired Baltimore city public school teacher and US Army veteran who receives a pension from the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System. We have a deep interest in the ethical and moral implications of the state retirement system's investment policies.

I urge the House Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 1455.

How in good conscience can our retirement system invest in a state that has bombed, displaced, and starved tens of thousands in Gaza, sponsors vicious settler and military attacks in the West Bank, and has started a brutal war that today is killing, wounding, and displacing untold numbers all over the Middle East?

As a Jewish person, of course I oppose anti-Semitism. But standing up to Israel isn't anti-Semitic. It's fully within Jewish values of "repairing the world"; we reject investment in the Israeli war machine while embracing investment here at home so that our communities can thrive.

The MSRPS has committed to socially responsible investing and is a signatory of the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment. The pension system's Investment Policy Manual outlines steps to protect human rights. Maryland has divested from nations because of oppressive regimes in the past (South African in 1984, Sudan and Iran in 2008, Russia in 2022). Let's do the same with Israel.

I hope this Committee will uphold our moral obligation to invest smartly, safely, and ethically. For these reasons I respectfully urge a favorable report for HB1455.