

## Written Testimony for Bill 1455 Divestment from Israel bill

My name is Maria Baroody; I am a retired Maryland public school teacher and I Favor HB1455.

Presently the MD State Retirement and Pension fund makes the state of MD a partner in Israel's genocide and ethnic cleansing in Palestine. Our portfolio makes us complicit in horrific human rights and genocide, even though the Board's Investment Policy Manual guides the Board to consider social and environmental factors that contribute to material risk. (Section 4, pg. 9) Human rights violations and destruction of the ecosystem in Palestine are material risks to be considered. Israel is in multifront wars in Lebanon, Syria, Iran, as well. Wars dependent on the United States supply of munitions and air defense. The U.S. debt is approximately \$38.9 trillion and growing. U.S. wars and military spending contribute greatly to the debt. I feel Maryland, also in debt, has no business exacerbating our financial risks by investing our pension into a nation that is already dependent on our federal tax money, money that could be better spent on paying off our debts and invested in our infrastructure.

Let me explain: Israel's conduct in Gaza, occupied Palestinian territory meets the legal definition of genocide. So states the world's largest association of genocide scholars, the International Association of Genocide Scholars on September 1, 2025. Earlier in July 25 Amnesty International and two Israeli human rights organizations, B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights Israel stated Israel is committing genocide in Gaza and unlawfully occupying East Jerusalem and the West Bank deliberately and systematically destroying the land, buildings and infrastructure, and transferring thousands of Palestinians off their lands. In other words ethnic cleansing.

As to the environment: The university of California's Global Health Institute describes Israel's offensive in Gaza as ecocide. 80,000 tons of bombs dropped on Gaza has decimated its land. That is more bomb tonnage than WW2 totals and far surpasses the "Little Boy" nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Today, hazardous asbestos, heavy metals, and medical waste saturate the Gazan land and air. Without functioning wastewater treatment plants raw sewage is being discharged daily into the soil, the coastal aquifer, and the Mediterranean Sea, threatening long term water security for the entire region. Deforestation, damage to natural reserves such as the Wadi Gaza, one of the world's busiest flyways, exacerbates climate change and reduces biodiversity.

Investing in Israeli bonds is directly involving Marylanders in an ongoing human and environmental catastrophe the world is witness to.

WE have the moral responsibility to acknowledge ownership of the genocide, ethnic cleansing and ecocide in Palestine via our portfolio and the moral duty to divest.

WE have the financial responsibility to ourselves and future generations to wind down our federal and state debts. Investing in militant Israel is contraindicated.

It is the right thing to do.