

The Honorable Chair  
Delegate Melissa Wells  
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee  
142 Lowe House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Vice Chair  
Delegate Kenneth Kerr

**RE: FAVORABLE - SUPPORT of House Bill 1382  
State Procurement - Prohibited Certifications - Boycotts of Foreign Countries**

To the Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and esteemed members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee,

My name is Desiree Mortenson, I am a resident of Frederick County and District 1. I am writing to name my support to HB 1382 the "State Procurement - Prohibited Certifications - Boycotts of Foreign Countries" bill. This bill undoes former Governor Hogan's executive order that prevented state contractors from participating in a boycott of Israel. The existing executive order conflicts with the basic first amendment principle that people have a right to engage in peaceful political action without being coerced by the state. Executive Order 01.01.2017.25 was unpopular when it was passed, and yet has remained in place for 9 years despite a new governor, so legislative action is necessary to correct it.

The Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement is one of the few ways for people worldwide to support Palestinians and meaningfully challenge Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism. It is based on the same peaceful tactics that worked against the apartheid regime in South Africa, which were as moral and necessary then as they are now. Maryland contractors should not have to choose between their morals and their contracts.

I hold a doctorate in International Relations and have conducted extensive research on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and North Africa. I was deeply shocked and saddened by the violence and loss of life that occurred on October 7, 2023. I have also been profoundly troubled by the humanitarian consequences of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, which has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and immense suffering among civilians.

House Bill 1382 helps ensure that Maryland's state procurement policies do not require individuals or businesses to certify positions related to boycotts of foreign countries as a condition for doing business with the state. The legislation supports principles of free expression and fairness in public contracting while maintaining the integrity of Maryland's procurement process.

Residents of Frederick County and communities across Maryland value respect for human rights, adherence to international law, and the protection of civilians during conflict. Supporting this bill reflects a commitment to ensuring that government contracting processes remain neutral with respect to individual viewpoints and are not used to compel political positions.

Passage of HB 1382 would reinforce Maryland's commitment to fairness, constitutional principles, and responsible governance. It reflects the desire of many Maryland residents to

encourage policies that uphold civil liberties while promoting accountability, peace, and the protection of vulnerable populations worldwide.

For these reasons and many more, **I ask the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee to give HB 1382 a favorable report.**

Thank you for your time,  
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