

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 Rice Rodriguez, I am a resident of Baltimore City. 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.

As someone who actively participates in organizing efforts for BDS with other city locals, this bill is extremely important to me. I have been involved in canvassing efforts for BDS and have had conversations with all kinds of people around the city. The vast majority of the people I've spoken to have been supportive of the BDS movement, many times signing the pledge sheet in my clipboard the moment I said it was for BDS. The fact that there is law barring anyone from participating in their first amendment constitutional right to free speech is ridiculous. To make it worse, the free speech it seeks to silence is the rightful criticism of the apartheid state of Israel. Desmond Tutu once called Israel's illegal occupation "in many ways worse than South Africa." Nothing could ever justify banning anyone from speaking out against the horrific treatment of Palestinians from the apartheid state of Israel.

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,
Rice Rodriguez
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