

March 9, 2026

Re: Testimony In Support of HB1382 - Boycotts of Foreign Countries

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mary Ella Jourdak. I am here today to express my strong support of HB1382 on behalf of Anne Arundel for Palestine, a group where I am a founding member. We are a multi-faith, multi-generational group that is dedicated to helping realize Palestinian self-determination. An executive order that limits the ability of our members and our neighbors across the state to boycott their own purchases and business dealings is not only a restriction of free speech, it is morally unjust.

It is deeply concerning that individuals and businesses that engage in free and protected political speech are limited because of an Executive Order. Regardless of whether or not a business owner has a moral stake in speaking out against a foreign country, the state of Maryland is compelling the speech of these entities under the penalty of perjury when signing off on a specific anti-BDS form.

We are not alone in that thinking. The first amendment upholds our ability to engage in free speech, as do rulings from the Supreme Court. In fact, they ruled that boycotting is "the highest rung on the hierarchy of first amendment values" [in the case NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co., 1982.].

This is an unjust practice for Maryland to engage in, and HB1382 would seek to ensure that our state remains one that values human rights and civic engagement, rather than penalizing advocacy on behalf of oppressed communities across the world. In essence, this existing executive order allows the state to boycott boycotters, and to take part in political action against citizens exercising their first amendment rights.

We ask that you find a favorable report for HB1382. Thank you.

Mary Ella Jourdak
Anne Arundel for Palestine
Annapolis, Maryland