

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 Katie Kretler and I am a resident of Anne Arundel County. I am writing to voice my support of 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 Palestinian self-determination and basic human rights. It is based on the same peaceful tactics that worked against the apartheid regime in South Africa. Likewise Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1956 boycotted Jim Crow Alabama. While Dr. King was criminalized for doing so, boycotts became central to the civil rights movement of the 60s and later the farm workers' movement of the 70s. But since 1982 the Supreme Court, as the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund points out, "has recognized that non-violent boycotts intended to advance civil rights constitute "form[s] of speech or conduct that [are] ordinarily entitled to protection under the First and Fourteenth Amendments." *NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co.*, 458 U.S. 886 (1982)" ([link here](#)).

In the past few years, state-level anti-BDS orders and laws have been used to stifle free speech. For example, the University of Georgia system cancelled a speaking engagement when the speaker refused to sign an oath not to boycott Israel. Anti-BDS laws are unconstitutional and are being successfully challenged, including in the case of that speaker ([link here](#)).

I want to be able to live with myself in 10 or 20 years as I look back on how I lived through the moral catastrophe of this time: the oppression and genocide of the Palestinians. I call on your committee to stand up for constitutionally protected free speech and conduct against the growing tide of authoritarianism.

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 consideration.

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