

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 Gretchen Tome and I am a resident of Baltimore City in District 45. 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.

It has been heartbreaking to watch the current genocide in Gaza and the continued settlement violence in the West Bank, and infuriating to know that our tax dollars support Israel's military, the genocide, and the occupation. We know that boycotts work from the evidence we've seen in our country with the Montgomery Bus Boycott being one of the most well-known examples. We must ensure that this form of protest is protected.

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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