



Member Organizations

Jewish Community Board of Akron
Canton Jewish Community Federation
Jewish Federation of Cincinnati
Jewish Federation of Cleveland
Jewish Federation of Columbus
Jewish Federation of Greater Dayton
Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo
Youngstown Area Jewish Federation

Affiliated Communities

Beth Israel Synagogue, Hamilton
Emanuel Jacob Congregation, Mansfield
Temple Shalom, Springfield
Kneseth Israel Temple, Wooster

Observer Organizations

Agudath Israel of America
Commission on Legislation & Civic Action, Ohio Region
American Israel Public Affairs Committee
American Jewish Committee
Cincinnati Chapter
Cleveland Chapter
Anti-Defamation League
Hadassah
Israel Bonds
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish National Fund, Cincinnati
Jewish National Fund, Cleveland
NA'AMAT USA
National Council of Jewish Women
Negev Foundation
Union for Reform Judaism
Orthodox Union
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
ORT America

Testimony in Support of HB 476
Ohio General Assembly | House of Representatives
Committee on Government Accountability & Oversight
April 26, 2016 | Columbus, OH

Chairman Brown, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Clyde, and Members of the Committee:

Background & Statement of Interest

I'm Howie Beigelman, executive director of Ohio Jewish Communities. We are the public policy and government relations arm of Ohio's eight Jewish federations, some fifty social service, educational, and cultural agencies providing for Ohioans of all faiths, or of none; Jewish represents our values, not who we serve. ***On behalf of Ohio's Jewish community, and a coalition of supporters as diverse as our state, I ask you to wholeheartedly support House Bill 476.***

You have heard (or will hear) today why any efforts to single out one liberal democracy for boycott, divestment, or sanctions, is unjust. And what such efforts mean for students on Ohio's campuses today. And most importantly, how devastating such efforts would be for Ohio's economy and its place in the information age.

I'd like to take a few minutes to put all the other speakers in context.

Before I begin, I'd like to ask you all to put down your cell phones and close your laptops. Each of those has innovative Israeli technology in it. Also, please don't instant message for the rest of this hearing, or use your phone's maps or GPS function for any reason.

As a start, that's what boycotting Israel looks like.

So there are real practical reasons to oppose boycotts.

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HB 476 Enjoys Diverse, Broad, & Deep Support

It's partly why so many groups are supporting this legislation. In the Jewish community of course, the bill has incredibly broad support, from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a renowned international human rights leader down to the local Jewish communities across Ohio.

And I'm sure you've all noticed the bipartisan sponsorship here, including so many in this House's leadership on both sides of the aisle, starting with Speaker Rosenberger & Leader Strahorn.

Here's why this bill enjoys such support.

1. The bill is just about a page in length. It is narrowly tailored to meet a need, without being an overreach.
2. It is easy to enforce.
3. It serves a vital state interest.
4. ***And it places Ohio squarely in line with federal policy since at least 1976¹ - and that of seven² other states - that have passed similar legislation: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, and South Carolina³.***

HB 476 Sends a Much Needed Message

But make no mistake. It sends one powerful message.

It tells everyone the State of Ohio will not countenance discrimination.

Because at its core, that's what BDS is.

If you replaced Israel with Jews or another religious or ethnic minority, or any other identifier, there's no chance Ohio would give taxpayer dollars to a business engaging in discrimination.

That's essentially all the bill does.

It does do one more thing though. It tells the world Ohio is open for business and welcomes innovators and inventors.

The US National Interest & Israel as a Moral Beacon

I don't have to tell anyone here the type of ally Israel is. I don't have to reiterate there's but one safe harbor - quite literally - in the Mideast. There's only one port that is always open to our navy. It's Haifa.

I don't have to tell you about Israel as a moral cause. They are a thriving democracy in a very dangerous world. It is the only country for a thousand miles where gays &

¹ Op-ed by Rep. Pete Roskam, WSJ, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/congress-can-fight-the-boycott-israel-movement-1432591991>

² Illinois and South Carolina were the first two states to enact such legislation and each serves as a model to other states, whereas Florida combines elements of both bills.

³ Indiana & Georgia have passed their respective Legislatures & await executive action.

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lesbians can live free. It's the only one in the entire region where women have equal rights.

Israel is home to a vibrant free press & vigorous political debate. Arab members of Israel's parliament have made public statements we might call treasonous here.

BDS is opposed by American Leadership in Both Parties

And I don't have to tell you that anti-Israel boycotts, divestments, and sanctions have been condemned by the broadest cross spectrum in American politics: President Obama, Vice President Biden, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Governor Kasich, and a bipartisan slate of members of Ohio's Congressional delegation.

Senator Portman joined with Democrat Ben Cardin to pass tough anti-BDS rules for trade negotiators.

And when the OSU student senate was considering a BDS resolution, it was Central Ohio's bipartisan trio of members: Joyce Beatty, Steve Stivers, & Pat Tiberi who wrote a joint letter opposing it.

BDS Would Hurt Ohio's Economy & Threatens Jobs in Ohio

But I'd like to focus on Ohio and Ohioans. A boycott of Israel would affect Ohio's economy both today & long into the future.

Because there is no place in Ohio, from Marietta to the Indiana border, up to Toledo and across to Youngstown that won't benefit today or in the future from increased trade & development with Israel.

Over 80 of the Fortune 500 are among the over 250 multinational companies with R&D centers in Israel⁴. They & many other companies are active in Israel, including the likes of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, GE, IBM, & Philips. That means ***a boycott shuts down Ohio's business connections to so many tech leaders.***

It also affects – as you heard – Israeli startups & small to medium size businesses looking to begin, consolidate and/or expand US operations. Right now, at least 40 Israeli companies are here. More are on the way; I had the chance to meet two of them recently as they toured Ohio.

They're in every sector. Aerospace & defense, including an at least seven year, \$295 million contract with Joint Systems Manufacturing Center in Lima to produce personnel carriers. Agriculture, which is Ohio's number one industry. Health care & pharmaceuticals, including work with the Cleveland Clinic and as well, Teva's plant in

⁴ Israel's Technology, Media, & Telecom Industry: An Overview for Businesses Considering Innovation Investments, Deloitte, 2014,
<http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/xa/Documents/us-dcf-israels-tmt-011615.pdf>

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Cincinnati. Cyber security and fintech. Startups, small businesses & international corporate giants.

There's work being done now in commercialization of research at several of Ohio's top universities and hospitals, including OSU, Sinclair Community College, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

And it's with that I'll conclude.

Recently, as part of an NIH sponsored program, ***Cincinnati Children's Hospital partnered with Israel's Rambam Hospital & Palestinian doctors to save the life of a teenage Arab girl with an incredibly rare endocrine disorder.***

If you forget every other word of testimony offered today, remember this. Because of cooperation between the US, Israel, and the Arab world a young girl is alive today. A boycott shuts that down. A boycott forecloses dialogue & debate.

BDS is bad for Ohio.

It's bad for Ohioans.

And it's bad for America & the world.

We urge you to approve this bill today.

Thank you. I'm happy to take any questions.

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Attachments:

Appendix A: List of Supporters

Appendix B: Major Ohio-Israel collaborations