

Arab-American Institute (AAI)  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  
Network of Arab-American Professionals (NAAP)  
National Network for Arab-American Communities (NNAAC)

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Cincinnati-Palestine Solidarity Coalition (CPSC)

May 10, 2016

**To: Ohio House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee**  
**Re: HB 476**

Dear respected members,

The House Bill 476 before this committee must be voted down as an affront to the constitution of the United States of America and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Political speech of all Americans is a constitutional right protected by the United States Bill of Rights, a guarantor of individual and political liberties that is the hallmark of the American political tradition. Freedom of speech in a political context is also guaranteed under the Universal Declarations of Human Rights, an international covenant of which the United States is a founding signatory.

Supreme Court rulings protect politically motivated boycotts as free speech rights under the First Amendment of the Constitution. For instance, when boycotts organized by the NAACP against white-owned businesses that discriminated against black people were in question, the Supreme Court made clear that protected forms of political speech are not violable in the name of regulating commerce.

The bill manifests an alarming attempt by the State of Ohio to repress a legitimate means of ethical and political dissent through boycotting a foreign nation that is in violation of American and International laws. Though non-violent action such as organized boycotts, the BDS (“Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment”) movement seeks to pressure the Israeli government to comply with international laws and respect human rights of the Muslim and Christian Palestinian populations within Israel and those in the illegally occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

The bill is an alarming attempt by a narrow foreign interest to stifle the political speech of all Ohioans who are engaged in a legitimate and peaceful national BDS movement against the illegal and undignified status quo, with respect to the Palestinian people, maintained by the state of Israel.

In such light, Ohio’s respected legislators are urged to vote down HR 476 as an unconstitutional roadblock in the pursuit of international justice.

Sincerely,

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