

My name is Benjamin Mutti, and I reside in Lexington, Ohio, located inside the Second Ohio House District represented by Mark Romanchuk. Recently I was asked by 84th District Representative Keith Faber's office to provide testimony to this Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives pertaining to House Concurrent Resolution No. 26 sponsored by Representatives Faber and Candice Keller on "Recognizing Jerusalem as Capital of Israel."

As a life-long citizen of Ohio, as a husband of a wife who attends a Yeshiva school, as a member of a messianic congregation, as a father of three sons who just celebrated a Bar Mitzvah for one son several months ago, and as an advocate for the nation of Israel, I come to this committee today to give my personal perspective on why I believe the esteemed Ohio Legislative body should pass a resolution to recognize Jerusalem as Capital of Israel.

Both Israel and Ohio are prosperous states comprised of immigrants, with representative-democratic forms of government, and both share exceptional histories. Israel is known as a high-tech startup superpower, and interestingly both Israel and Ohio share common bonds in agriculture, life sciences, and aerospace.

In August 2015, 24 delegates (11 from the State House) from Ohio traveled to Israel. The delegation involved the exchange of technology, investments and livestock. It is my understanding that Ohio has had a relationship with Israel thru the Negev Foundation for the past 18 years when former Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Fred Daily first travelled to Israel.

On June 17, 2008, Israeli dairy experts visited a Mennonite farmer Floyd Zimmerman in my Richland County as part of this Ohio-Israeli Agricultural Initiative sponsored by the Negev Foundation.

In 2016, the 200th Red Horse Squadron based at our local Mansfield National Guard served as the project lead for the construction of four multi-purpose buildings in Israel providing permanent operational exercise space for U.S. and Israeli military forces participating in joint military exercises.

To further illustrate the relational ties Ohio has with Israel, Knesset Member Yehuda Glick personally received an apology letter addressed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from 103 North Central Ohio clergy regarding U.N. Resolution 2334. In this letter, the clergy apologized for the position the U.S. Federal government took in December 2016 for not opposing the Resolution which opposed Israel's sovereignty over its own land. According to our Ohio friend who delivered this letter, Mr. Glick had tears in his eyes as he graciously received the letter and embraced our Ohio courier.

This year for the first time, the Richland County, Ohio Treasurer was authorized to invest up to \$200,000 of taxpayer dollars in Israeli bonds at the request of leading clergymen from 42 congregations in Richland County.

In December 2017 on the same week President Donald Trump announced his intentions to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, three faith leaders in North Central Ohio in a published article all expressed their staunch support.

On March 6, 2018, I was personally contacted by Reporter Adam Elyahu Berkowitz from the Golan Heights who was elated to hear a report about prosperity North Central Ohio was experiencing after the clergy apology letter to Israel.

Deputy Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, Hilik Bar is the first foreign parliamentarian to address the Ohio State Legislature and was given the "Key to the State of Ohio" an honor only three others have received and was told that "you have no better friend than the State of Ohio" by Speaker of the House Cliff Rosenberger.

Because of the reconciliatory efforts by North Central Ohio clergy in the Second Ohio House District, I have been told that Mansfield, Ohio has been chosen as one of five locations in the Buckeye State this fall to host the Deputy Speaker Hilik Bar.

Ohio became the fourteenth state to pass legislation, which prohibits the state from contracting with companies that engage in boycotts of Israel, including firms located outside the state, and also requires companies to explicitly state in contracts that they are not boycotting or divesting,

It is my sincere hope that Ohio will become the first state to pass a resolution recognizing Jerusalem as capital of Israel. Our relationship with Israel will provide economic opportunity. Why pass a resolution recognizing Jerusalem as capital?...as an ally of Israel and a trading partner to Israel, .it's the right thing to do.