



Representative Eric Synenberg
State Representative, District 21

Good morning Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the House Development Committee,

Thank you for giving my joint sponsor, Representative Thomas Hall, and I the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill (HB) 188, that would create the Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership.

This bill seeks to form a seventeen-person commission comprised of six appointed members from the Ohio House and Senate, eight members appointed by the Governor who would represent various business and cultural interest groups, and three non-appointed ex-officio members. The commission will focus on exploring bilateral trade and collaboration, fostering business and academic exchanges, and promoting economic support and infrastructure investment between Ohio and Israel, one of the United States' greatest allies. Additionally, the commission will look to expand multilateral partnerships beyond Ohio and Israel to other nations regarding emerging technologies and innovation opportunities, such as Europe, Asia, and, most notably, Gulf states like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar.

Members of the committee and the public may rightly wonder, "Why Israel?" Well, Israel has earned its reputation worldwide as the "Start-Up Nation." The 2009 book of the same name by Dan Senor examined how, at the time, sixty-three Israeli companies were listed on the NASDAQ. Sixteen years later, that number has more than doubled, with 135 Israeli companies currently listed on the index. According to the Department of State's 2023 Investment Climate Statement, this places Israel among the top four countries for trading on the NASDAQ. U.S. businesses account for almost two-thirds of the more than 300 research and development firms established by multinational companies in Israel. American tech companies like Intel, Microsoft, and Apple built their first overseas R&D facilities in Israel. The

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Contact Information:

77 S. High St, 10 Fl
Columbus, OH 43215
Office: 614-644-5079
Email: Rep21@ohiohouse.gov



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U.S. is Israel's largest trading partner, and Israel is the U.S.'s 26th largest trading partner. It's no wonder that CEO World Magazine considers Israel the world's fourth most start-up-friendly country. For comparison, Ireland, the most recent nation that Ohio entered a partnership with, ranked 17th. The reason for Israel's strong entrepreneurial spirit is often traced to the unique nature of the nation – 77 years old, with few natural resources, and the constant threat of war.

Ohio and Israel already share a strong history of trade and collaboration. Israel was one of the first nations to establish a trade office with our state through the Department of Development. This two-person office was in operation from 1990 to 2011 and played a key role in encouraging economic development in both Ohio and Israel. Additionally, Ohio is home to many Israeli entrepreneurs, further strengthening our ties. Our economic relationship is also demonstrated by the Ohio-Israel Agriculture and Cleantech initiative, a 22-year-old partnership that has led to nearly \$100 million in trade in agriculture, sustainable technology, and water systems. Worth noting, this initiative was started largely at the direction of then U.S. Senator and former Governor George Voinovich, who recognized the possibilities of a strong Ohio- Israel trade partnership. With this bill, we seek to formalize this partnership and continue building on the momentum, ensuring Ohio remains one of Israel's top choices to do business.

Beyond Ohio, [twenty-six other states](#)¹ and Washington, D.C., have established formal agreements similar to what we are proposing today. Additionally, eight other states have developed frameworks for

¹ U.S.-Israel Relations: Cooperative Agreements with Israel." *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/cooperative-agreements-with-israel-by-state>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

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collaboration with Israel, involving key business groups and universities in research, the economy, and innovation.

With your support, we can strengthen the Ohio-Israel relationship and capitalize on the strengths of both economies to benefit Ohio. Thank you, and I would now like to turn it over to my joint sponsor, Representative Hall.

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