



OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Rick Carfagna, Senior Vice President
Ohio Chamber of Commerce
Proponent Testimony – House Bill 188
May 7, 2025

Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the House Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 188. My name is Rick Carfagna, and I am Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce (OCC). The Ohio Chamber is the state's leading business advocate, and we represent over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness, and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

The Chamber is proud to stand in support of HB 188, which creates the Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership. Between our two nations, this endeavor will advance trade, investment, policy issues, business and academic exchanges, economic support, infrastructure, industry, and other issues as determined by the Partnership, as well as multilateral partnerships between Ohio, Israel, and other nations.

Ohio and Israel have long collaborated through numerous partnerships to exchange ideas and learn from each other, particularly in the fields of academic collaboration, technology, manufacturing, agriculture, and clean water. According to the Ohio Department of Development's *Ohio Export Report*, Ohio exported nearly \$242 million worth of manufacturing goods to Israel in 2023. Furthermore, the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise reports that since 1996 Ohio's exports to Israel have totaled more than \$6 billion, and Israel now ranks as Ohio's 26th leading trade partner. Ohio also ranks 12th among all states in exports to Israel.

On a national scale, Israel is the United States' 27th largest trading partner. U.S. goods exports to Israel in 2024 were \$14.8 billion (up \$813.7 million from 2023), with U.S. goods imports from Israel totaling \$22.2 billion (up \$1.4 billion from 2023).

The United States was the first country to recognize Israel as an independent state in May 1948. Since that time, Israel remains America's most reliable partner in the Middle East, and both countries are closely bound by historic and cultural ties as well as by mutual interests. As the only country with free trade agreements with both the United States and the European community, Israel is also capable of serving as a bridge for international trade between the United States and Europe.

The Ohio Chamber appreciates the efforts of Representatives Hall and Synenberg to craft this Partnership, thereby uniting Ohio's elected officials, higher education institutions, the statewide business community, and Ohio's Jewish communities to foster new levels of innovation and economic opportunities between Israel and the Buckeye State. We encourage your affirmative vote on HB 188.