



Proponent Testimony | HB 188
Creating the Ohio Israel Trade & Innovation Partnership
Ohio House of Representatives | Development Committee
May 7, 2025 | Columbus, OH

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and Members of the Committee:

Statement of Interest.

Ohio Jewish Communities is the statewide government advocacy, public affairs, and community relations voice of our eight Jewish federations and their 150 community, cultural, social, and human services agencies on the front lines helping Ohioans of every faith – and of none – every day. We submit this testimony on their behalf as well.

We're grateful to Representatives Hall and Synenberg for sponsoring, as well as their eleven bipartisan cosponsors.

What Does this Legislation Do?

We all know Ohio is at an inflection point economically. The state, through the work of the General Assembly and the Governor, as well as JobsOhio and the regional affiliates, have produced some incredible economic development wins for Ohio.

But we also know several things are still true: first, Ohio will need innovation to continue to grow its economic leadership; second, Ohio is still not on the list for many businesses or foreign direct investment; and, there are still areas of the state where workforce options and opportunity do not reach enough people.

The Trade & Innovation Partnership that would be created by this bill, simply put, makes Ohio more competitive today and in the decades to come.

The legislation would strengthen what's already happening right here in the Statehouse, and in counties and cities across Ohio. And, it would provide opportunities to grow Ohio's innovation output, give Ohio companies a competitive advantage, and diversify our workforce.

We heard some of the questions raised during the sponsor testimony, and we wanted to suggest that the Partnership be set up to:

Connect Ohio and Israeli Universities, Medical Centers, and Research Hubs for Life-Changing R&D

Innovation begins with great ideas and the research and development behind them to create something new. One area of the Partnership's focus would be helping fund specific R&D projects to innovate new products, new solutions, and new procedures.

Find Clients for Solutions by Startups to Test, Not "Proof of Concept" but Proof of Market

Proving that your new solution works is just the first step. So many startups and innovators can create something new, but for some reason, they can't find a market for it. The Partnership will also focus on finding those first critical clients to help startups prove their market.

Bringing Workers to Ohio as Well as Training Ohioans to FutureProof Their Employability

Finally, helping to create more taxpaying roles is vital, and the Partnership will look to attract startup employees working internationally to Ohio to help them get boots on the ground here and establish business roots here. As well, the Partnership will work to help upskill those who can work in the innovation space and fill the roles these startups and innovative companies are creating.

We also believe, as you may hear from others, how imperative it is for the Partnership to have at least one staff member making these connections and pitching Ohio on a daily basis. That will be key to taking the lessons learned from Ohio's past success here and replicating it statewide.

Why Israel? Some Key Past Successes

Ohio and Israel already have some well-established partnerships and collaborations in agriculture and clean water, in the medical and life sciences space, including something special with Cincinnati Children's Hospital, but also a great medical device company that the previous General Assembly helped to expand across Ohio.

Locally, YBI, the Youngstown Business Incubator, has shown real success at attracting smaller Israeli companies in the medical device and additive manufacturing spaces. Those companies are hiring right now.

In the Dayton Region, the partnership between Montgomery County, the City of Dayton, and the Dayton Development Coalition known as DRITA – the Dayton Region Israel Trade Alliance – has, thanks to Wright-Patt and the unmanned systems work at Springfield, attracted several companies. Over five years, DRITA has had a quantified impact of \$54 million in local revenue, and the creation of 93 full-time jobs.

Simlat, an Israeli drone leader, is also a partner with Sinclair for UAS project related to commercialization, the Ohio Federal Research Network (OFRN), and National Science Foundation Center of Autonomous Air Mobility and Sensing Industry-University Cooperative Research Center.

DRITA connected LION, a Dayton-based company, with an Israeli partner. Together, they established a cutting-edge fire and rescue training and simulation center in Israel. This facility has hosted Israeli firefighters, European professionals, and high-profile visits from Israel's President and Minister of Internal Affairs. Building on this success, LION has been awarded additional contracts and has significantly expanded its business in Israel, further strengthening its international footprint.

And, DRITA has helped Ohio companies even when the US expansion isn't happening here. When one of Israel's leading companies, Elbit Systems, expanded to South Carolina, DRITA was able to identify 15 local companies who could support their supply chain.

Why Now? If Some of This is Already Happening, Why is This Legislation Needed?

Now is the time to push hard for the innovation partnerships. Looking at Israel's partnerships with the Abraham Accords specifically, we can see they are focused in areas Ohio is showing growth and leadership. These include aerospace, additive manufacturing, agritech, defensetech, foodtech, logistics, space technologies, smart mobility, and unmanned systems.

With the Gulf Countries, such as the U.A.E., promising major investment in the US, and with the shift to reshoring or on-shoring, Ohio should be a prime candidate for some of that investment.

In addition, international economic uncertainty has at least one leading Israeli venture capital fund advising portfolio companies with a focus on the North American market to consider relocating here all or a significant portion of their operations. Again, Ohio ought to be a prime candidate for many of these.

Ohio putting in some funding to jump start this, we believe, will attract other investment and will help the Partnership leverage that GRF funding for even greater impact.

A Vision for Ohio's Future

Imagine an Ohio where small and large enterprises are the best in class. Imagine every region of Ohio has growing startups and research and development projects hiring.

For an industrial focused state like Ohio, our way of growing such businesses has to be different than what you see on the coasts.

As a leading Ohio based venture capitalist recently told us, "From our perspective, investing at the intersection of technology and traditional industry, one of the most powerful ways Ohio can attract leading Israeli startups is by actively leveraging our state's established corporations as early validation partners and pilot sites. Demonstrating clear market demand and providing a pathway for Israeli tech to solve real problems for Ohio companies can be a more significant draw than general incentives alone," effectively integrating Ohio's corporate strengths into its attraction strategy.

Who Else Supports this Legislation?

As you can see on the attached addendum, we have a growing list of business leadership organizations and community groups who are supporting this bill. That includes the Ohio Chamber and Ohio Life Sciences who you heard from today, but also the Ohio Business Roundtable, Dayton Development Coalition, and YBI – the Youngstown Business Incubator.

Next Steps

We hope we can move this bill quickly, including, if necessary, based on the testimony you'll hear, to amend it slightly. We ask that you continue this committee process, and as soon as possible, report the bill out favorably. There's a lot of jobs depending on it.

I'm happy to take any questions. Thank you again for your time.

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Supporting Organizations

