

Proponent Testimony in Support of HB 188: Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership
Ohio House | Development Committee
Columbus, OH | May 7, 2025

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

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Ohio House Bill (HB) 188, legislation that would create the ***Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership***.

My name is Evan Remer, and I am a community leader speaking on behalf of *JewishColumbus*. JewishColumbus is Central Ohio's largest funder of Jewish programs, serving and enriching the Jewish community from birth to senior living. Professionally, I work for a large insurance carrier where I am a Product Manager focused on innovation and digital enablement. I am responsible for evaluating new strategic partnership opportunities with insurtechs and other external technology organizations. Views expressed here today are my own.

I would like to share two brief stories that illustrate the potential impact of the proposed Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership. The first is a real-world success story from my time working to facilitate trade between Israel and the United States. The second story highlights efforts already underway – even in the absence of a formal partnership – to build relationships with Israeli start-ups and entrepreneurs here in Ohio.

Story #1: American-Israel Chamber of Commerce, Southeast

Earlier in my career, I served as the Director of Special Projects for the *American-Israel Chamber of Commerce, Southeast* (now *Connex: the America Israel Business Connector*) in Atlanta, Georgia. This private, non-governmental, and non-profit organization facilitated research, trade, and economic development between Israel and the southeastern United States, primarily Georgia and the surrounding states.

The Chamber sourced innovation and technology from Israel and matched these solutions to the needs of U.S. companies and local municipalities across various industry sectors, including medicine, security, software, and technology. We celebrated when major employers in the Metro Atlanta region formed partnerships with Israeli companies, supporting jobs and economic activity in Israel. Conversely, these Israeli companies, seeking proximity to their largest customers and investors, chose to establish U.S. offices in Atlanta rather than in larger, more well-known cities like New York or Los Angeles largely due to the efforts of the Chamber and its members. When the Israeli companies opened offices in Atlanta, they stimulated the economy – hiring employers, leasing real estate, buying/renting homes, etc. Atlanta offered a low cost of living, an educated workforce, and a strong, vibrant Jewish community—advantages that Ohio can similarly offer.

The American-Israel Chamber was recognized by the Atlanta Business Chamber of Commerce for its outstanding contributions to economic development. Ohio has the potential to achieve similar success with the establishment of the Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership.

Story #2: Insurtech Israel visits Ohio

Each of the last two years, I have collaborated with *JobsOhio* and *One Columbus* (formerly Columbus2020) to host a delegation of Israeli insurance technology start-ups and scale-ups here in Columbus. This year, the *Insurtech Israel* delegation's visit expanded to also include meetings in Cincinnati, providing Israeli startups with access to potential customers and partners, including insurance carriers, brokers, and legislative and regulatory representatives.

While it's still early, I am encouraged by the relationships and trust that we are building with Insurtech Israel and I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. I am pleased to report that at least one company from this year's delegation has already expressed interest in establishing a U.S. office in Columbus.

In closing, I wanted to share a few additional thoughts about the potential benefits of partnering with Israel to create the Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership.

Israel is a global innovation powerhouse, recognized as the "Startup Nation" and routinely ranked #1 or #2 in startups per capital in the world. With a culture rooted in resilience, creativity, and fast-paced innovation, Israel has built thriving ecosystems in sectors like aerospace, agrotech, fintech & Insurtech, as well as medtech, cyber security, mobility and more. These industry verticals map neatly to many of Ohio's geographically and economically diverse regions.

Israeli companies are known for embracing a "deploy fast, learn faster" R&D model—pushing early-stage technologies into real-world use, then iterating rapidly. This agile innovation culture encourages bold risk-taking and quick adaptation, producing groundbreaking results in record time. Partnering with Israel gives Ohio access to tested, evolving technologies across multiple sectors.

The Abraham Accords have opened new doors for Israeli companies to do business with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and beyond. By partnering with Israel now, Ohio gains a strategic entry point not only into Israel's market, but also into the rapidly growing economies of the broader Middle East and North Africa. An Ohio-based innovation hub can become a center for trilateral cooperation—where Israeli tech, Middle Eastern capital, and Ohio talent come together to build and scale solutions with global impact.

By establishing a formal Innovation Hub, we incentivize Israeli startups to open front offices, R&D labs, and manufacturing facilities in Ohio. This would translate directly into:

- High-skill, high-wage jobs for Ohioans

- Revitalization of rust belt regions through new tech-driven industries
- Greater investment and global connectivity for Ohio's economy

This isn't just a tech play—it's a strategic workforce development plan that empowers local talent and attracts global capital.

This hub would be more than an economic boost—it would establish **Ohio as the gateway to the U.S. market for Israeli innovation**. Likewise, Israeli companies would gain a strategic partner with Ohio's **logistics infrastructure, world-class universities, manufacturing strength, and affordability**. It's a **win-win partnership** that positions both regions as leaders in the next generation of global innovation.

In conclusion, I urge you to support House Bill 188. This partnership will foster economic growth, technological innovation, and cultural exchange, benefiting both Ohio and Israel. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Evan Remer