



Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, and Ranking Member Abdullahi, and Members of the House Development Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 188 that creates the Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership.

My name is Willa Bluestone, and I am the Director of Policy for Ohio Life Sciences, the statewide industry association representing Ohio's life sciences ecosystem. We have over 300 members that span sectors such as biotechnology, gene and cell therapy, medical technology and devices, diagnostics, research institutions, contract manufacturers, and many more. Ohio is home to approximately 4,900 life sciences establishments and we generate approximately \$2 billion in annual tax revenue.

At its core, House Bill 188 is about investing in Ohio's economic future by forging a strategic partnership with a proven innovation powerhouse – the State of Israel. This legislation created a structured, well-resourced platform for bilateral trade, collaborative research, workforce development, and innovation across priority sectors including life sciences, ag-tech, cybersecurity, an advanced manufacturing.

Ohio is emerging as a national leader in the life sciences industry. With our world-class research institutions anchoring the major cities in Ohio, and the growing number of biotech startups and manufacturing firms outside of the three Cs, we are poised for even greater growth. However, our success depends on continued investment in talent, infrastructure, and international partnerships that accelerate commercialization and scaling abilities.

Israel's life sciences sector, which includes more than 1,800 active companies employing over 75,000 people, is globally renowned for excellence in digital health, biotech R&D, and medical devices. In 2024 alone, Israeli companies attracted more than \$2 billion in private capital and launched four IPOs on U.S. exchanges.

A formal partnership between Ohio and Israel offers mutual benefits: Israeli companies gain access to Ohio's skilled workforce, favorable business climate, and strategic location in the U.S. market. In turn, Ohio companies and institutions gain access to world-class Israeli innovation, collaborative research opportunities, and new global investment streams.

The Partnership's focus on targeted innovation clusters aligns directly with priorities set by JobsOhio and this Legislature to grow sectors that generate high-wage jobs and long-term value. These clusters—particularly life sciences—are eager for global collaboration, and H.B. 188 provides the framework and resources to make that happen.

Ohio's low cost of doing business, logistics infrastructure, and research capacity make us uniquely suited to serve as a landing pad for Israeli companies looking to scale in the United States. In return, Ohio businesses stand to benefit from Israeli expertise in rapid prototyping, digital transformation, and venture-backed scaling.

We appreciate the inclusive structure of this Partnership allowing for key industry leaders, economic developers, and policy makers to push Ohio into the next generation of innovation. In summary, HB 188 is a forward-looking proposal that strengthens international relationships while creating tangible economic opportunities in Ohio. For the life sciences industry, it represents a chance to align global innovation with local talent and job growth.

Ohio Life Sciences is a strong proponent of House Bill 188 and looks forward to continuing this discussion.

Chairman Hoops and Members of the House Development Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Willa Bluestone  
Director, Policy  
Ohio Life Sciences