

Written Testimony of Jan Nespör, PhD  
**HB291 Creates the Ohio International Trade Commission**  
State of Ohio  
Development Committee  
June 16, 2025

Chair Hoops, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the Development Committee

Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify against HB291. My name is Jan Nespör, and I am a professor of Education Policy at the Ohio State University. I do not represent Ohio State, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

Although other countries are mentioned in the proposed legislation (Ireland, for no obvious reason, and Japan, already the country with the largest FDI in the state), this bill is about creating tighter links with Israel, “particularly regarding electronic and cyber warfare capabilities.” The proposed Commission would deepen the state’s already unwise investment in the military economy<sup>1</sup> -- there’s a negative correlation between military expenditures and economic growth.<sup>2</sup> It would also tighten the state’s ties to Israel’s cyber warfare industry at a moment when that industry is actively involved in multiple wars, under stress from international sanctions, and being bought up by western corporations and private equity.<sup>3</sup> The bill would fund this dangerous military partnership in an opaque fashion, allowing the Commission to raise money “*through direct solicitation or other fundraising events alone, or with other groups, and accept gifts, grants, and bequests from individuals, corporations, foundations, governmental agencies, and public and private organizations and institutions.*” This suggests that the Commission would mainly serve those groups that contribute large sums to its operation, and that in turn it would function as a vessel through which these “corporations, foundations,” and “government agencies” – apparently even those of foreign countries – could insinuate them into policy and practice regarding the state’s critical infrastructure. The bill thus invites foreign influence into Ohio policy, inserts Ohio in Israel’s ongoing wars, and does these things without transparency, oversight, or public input or benefit.

If the legislature wants to improve foreign trade it should pursue deeper relations with the state’s top export markets – Canada, Mexico, China, Japan, and Brazil<sup>4</sup> -- and develop better relations with the countries from which most of its foreign-born citizens come (India, Mexico). If Ohio wants to develop particular industries that would promote a livable future for its citizens there are many better alternatives than cyber warfare. Please stand with Ohio families and vote NO on HB 291.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cyber.ohio.gov/home> ; <https://www.tabletmag.com/feature/american-vulcan-palmer-luckey-anduril>

<sup>2</sup> Elshafei, A. S. M. A., Shrahili, M., Kayid, M., & Mohammad, S. (2025). Military expenditure and economic growth in the largest military spending country: Using machine learning analysis. *Journal of Radiation Research and Applied Sciences*, 18(2), 101429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrras.2025.101429>

<sup>3</sup> For example, <https://www.israelhayom.com/2025/04/04/how-the-us-led-to-israels-offensive-cyber-collapse/>  
<https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/google-acquisition-tech-wiz-israel-gaza-8200/>  
<https://www.calcalistech.com/ctechnews/article/r1er11mi61e>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.worldstopexports.com/ohios-top-10-exports/>

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