

# OPPONENT TESTIMONY TO HOUSE BILL 291

*Before the House Development Committee*

Chairman Hoops, Vicechair Lorenz, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and the rest of the respectable members of the House Development Committee: I sincerely thank you for the chance to present my opponent testimony and proposed changes to House Bill 291.

## **THE CORE OF THE BILL**

In theory, HB 291 has potential. Before submitting this testimony in opposition, I wanted to extensively review the proponent testimony and the bill itself to understand what is being proposed. What is it that makes this bill desirable? What is the “core” of this bill, what principles and ideals do Ohioans feel they need?

After my review, I have found that at its core, this bill seeks to make Ohio a strong state which thrives on international collaboration and partnerships to create a diverse job market, expand current technology research, and help local Ohio businesses reach out to larger client bases globally. I do see this bill’s potential, and I must agree it would certainly help assist Ohio in creating a diverse future with an expanding job pool and strengthened economic growth and security. Yet, I stand before you today to oppose this bill as introduced.

## **WHY OPPOSE THE BILL AS IT HAS BEEN INTRODUCED?**

This bill is a revision of House Bill 188. It no longer seeks to only create a trade alliance with only Israel, as 188 did, but it now includes Japan, Ireland, and two other countries as indicated by the director of development. I must be forthcoming in saying I am generally supportive of the idea of a foreign trade alliance, but as legislators, you know better than most that we must be careful with what we codify, when we do it, and why we do it.

In 1939, during the Holocaust, Alfred Sloan Jr., then the acting chairman of General Motors, stated: “According to my belief . . . an international business operating throughout the world should conduct its operations in strictly business terms, without regard to the political beliefs of its management, or the political beliefs of the country in which it is operating.”<sup>1</sup> This was how he justified continuing to do business in Nazi Germany, thus directly supporting the Nazi government and furthering the genocide against Jews that happened in the 1930s and 40s.

This is a morally reprehensible justification on neglecting taking adverse action on a nation committing a genocide. I know the other testimonies of my comrades and colleagues will detail the genocide Israel is inflicting upon Palestine, so I will

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<https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/the-us-response-to-the-holocaust-was-part-of-a-lon>

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not explain it in detail, but I will state it for the record in no uncertain terms: Israel is committing a genocide in Palestine. Thus, a question I would like you all to consider, if we were all currently gathered here today but in 1940, and our country considered Germany its greatest ally in Europe, but this exact bill read “Germany” instead of “Israel,” would you pass it? Would you strengthen a political alliance with a genocidal, blood-thirsty ethno-state seeking to eliminate “undesirables” and establish a “supreme race?” Or would you see an issue in the timing of codifying an alliance with a nation committing some of the most horrid crimes you have ever heard?

## **ISRAEL IS A SECURITY CONCERN, NOT AN ALLY**

I intend to highlight Israel’s betrayal of the United States as a point of opposition in addition to the ongoing genocide in Palestine. I would also like to discuss Israel’s unreliable history that makes this partnership unstable and a betrayal of your constituents’ trust in you as our elected officials should you choose to pass it.

This bill specifically focuses on “Joint research agreements on issues of mutual interest, particularly with Israel regarding electronic and cyber warfare capabilities.”<sup>2</sup> This is highly concerning considering Israel’s unreliable history of espionage, betrayal of US support, and refusal to allow NSO Group to be adequately investigated for abuse of the Pegasus spyware system.

First, Israel’s espionage of the United States has been the most concerning amongst any so-called “ally” of the United States. In 2014, a report on Israel found that “[Israel]’s efforts to steal U.S. secrets under the cover of trade missions and joint defense technology contracts have ‘crossed red lines.’”<sup>3</sup> This is concerning as part of this bill intends to create more contracts in the hopes of advancing electronic and cyber capabilities. How can we trust them with such sensitive data and research when they are going behind our federal government’s back to steal it anyway? This is like seeing a thief in your home and choosing to leave your doors unlocked instead of barricading the door to keep them out.

Secondly, the Trump administration is well-known for citing China as a concern for the United States, at times seeming to indicate China is this country’s top enemy. Yet, Israel has had multiple incidents of giving secret US technology to China. In one instance from 1994, “[Israel] sold China the plans for the [Lavi Fighter Bomber, a deadly air weapon] and the associated secret U.S. technology.

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[https://search-prod.lis.state.oh.us/api/v2/general\\_assembly\\_136/legislation/hb291/00\\_IN/pdf/](https://search-prod.lis.state.oh.us/api/v2/general_assembly_136/legislation/hb291/00_IN/pdf/)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/israel-wont-stop-spying-us-249757>

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This has enabled the Chinese to build their own version of this new generation of fighter aircraft.”<sup>4</sup> 1994 was over 30 years ago, so perhaps this is not a concern for the future...is what I wish I could say to chalk this up to being a one-off. But in 2013, Israel did it again, sending China “a miniature refrigeration system manufactured ... used for missiles and in electro-optic equipment.” Reports by Aretz Sheva, an Israeli newspaper, cites further future concerns in which it can foresee Israel to continue giving away our country’s secrets and information to the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Lastly, please consider Israel’s involvement in protecting NSO Group’s spyware, known as Pegasus. Pegasus is cyberware that is supposedly used for counterterrorism, but has a history of being abused and targeting civilians and journalists.<sup>6</sup> Meta Platforms took legal action against Pegasus, filing a high-stakes lawsuit in the United States to seek damages related to the NSO Group’s use of the software to hack WhatsApp users. Yet Israel’s government intervened and attempted to hinder justice by seizing documents about Pegasus spyware in an effort to prevent the company from being able to comply with demands made by WhatsApp in a US court to hand over information about the invasive technology. “Documents suggest the seizures were part of an unusual legal manoeuvre created by Israel to block the disclosure of information about Pegasus, which the government believed would cause “serious diplomatic and security damage” to the country.”<sup>7</sup> Pegasus was forced to pay substantial damages to Meta, but they were also found to target iOS and Android operating systems, all without valid reason and as a severe abuse of their capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

I respectfully request every one of you consider the repercussions of giving Israel *increased* access to our sensitive research and data at a time where, realistically, if any other country did this, we would be decreasing our relations with them. Think of what they have done when we draw a red line, and to now permit them open access to the hard work, research, and technological innovations of the innocent, trusting, and hard-working citizens of Ohio may be a reckless decision that wantonly ignores Israel’s clear disregard for American integrity.

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<https://www.wrmea.org/1996-january/u.s.-military-technology-sold-by-israel-to-china-upse-ts-asian-power-balance.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2014/06/06/how-israel-has-betrayed-america/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://us.norton.com/blog/emerging-threats/pegasus-spyware#>

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<https://www.theguardian.com/news/article/2024/jul/25/israel-tried-to-frustrate-us-lawsuit-over-pegasus-spyware-leak-suggests>

<sup>8</sup> <https://about.fb.com/news/2025/05/winning-the-fight-against-spyware-merchant-nso/>

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## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND NEXT STEPS**

I understand the proponents of this bill seek to enhance the economic endeavors of Ohio business and the jobforce of our state through international partnerships. I am in firm support of this principle. However, I need to be unequivocal in my condemnation of Israel, and someone must speak out about the legitimate concern for the safety and integrity of the people of the State of Ohio. The way we execute this is of crucial importance for what precedents we set and how we value our people.

I respectfully demand the removal of Israel from the language of this bill. Not only is the action of partnering with Israel so any reason morally reprehensible in the face of Israel's ongoing international law violations<sup>9</sup> and genocide of the Palestinian people, but the last thing we as a state should be doing is encouraging relations with a state committing an unconscionable evil. Furthermore, as explained, Israel is a nation known for taking information and technology from our country and giving it to non-allied nations such as China. They do not respect our legal system nor our integrity.

Please consider these suggestions. It is wonderful for us to have our own trade commission to continue to stabilize and grow our economy. But it is in no way acceptable to continue to entertain strengthening alliances and permanently codify relations with a country known for its continuous war-mongering, betrayal of our country, and illegal practices with cyber technology.