

Opponent Testimony on HB 291

Jay Qutiefan, President, American Muslims for Palestine – Columbus

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong opposition to House Bill 291.

My name is Jay Qutiefan, and I am Co President of American Muslims for Palestine in Columbus. I'm also a lifelong Ohio resident, a parent, and a proud Palestinian American.

I come before you today deeply alarmed by the direction that this bill would take our state in both economically and ethically.

HB 291 is not a trade bill. It is a policy vehicle for foreign influence and militarized tech development. The bill's language explicitly prioritizes cyberwarfare research with Israel, a foreign government currently under investigation human rights violations and genocide. It also enables the commission to solicit funds from private and foreign sources with no safeguards, no ethical review, and no public transparency. That alone should be disqualifying.

As a Palestinian American, I cannot remain silent while my state government considers embedding partnerships with a foreign military apparatus known for surveillance abuses, espionage, and repression. Israel has a documented history of misusing technology — including spyware like Pegasus — to target U.S. officials, journalists, and human rights advocates.

To allow this kind of collaboration on Ohio soil is to make Ohio complicit!

As an Ohioan, I want our technology and research investments to stay right here — to benefit our communities, create local jobs, and support our economy. These resources should not be handed over to foreign government or defense companies

What worries me even more is the timing. Ohio is about to host Anduril Industries, a weapons manufacturer that builds battlefield drones, surveillance towers, and AI-powered war tech — just south of Columbus. HB 291 would make it easier for companies like Anduril to receive state grants, partnerships, and public legitimacy — all without input from the people of Ohio.

If this bill passes, it would allow our universities and tech infrastructure to be pulled into a global war economy. Ohio taxpayers could end up funding and developing weapons

used against civilians overseas, while our own schools, hospitals, and neighborhoods go underfunded.

That's not putting Ohio first. That's putting Ohio up for sale.

I urge this committee to reject HB 291 — not just because it's fiscally irresponsible, but because it's morally wrong. Do you want Ohio to be remembered as the state that opened its doors to foreign militarization and privatized war tech?

Please vote no. Ohio's future is in your hands.

Thank you.