

My name is Peggy Gish, a resident of Athens, and I strongly oppose HB 188. This bill would funnel millions of taxpayer dollars into a foreign partnership with the State of Israel at a time when Ohio communities are facing deep cuts to libraries, schools, healthcare, infrastructure, and public services and many people will be going hungry.

I spent time over a 16-year span, in Palestine with a peace organization, and have personally witnessed the suppression of their economic system by Israel, the continual attacks on families, their olive orchards, crops and livestock by Israeli settlers, systematically demolishing their homes, in Israel's attempt to drive them out of their homes and lands. I have witnessed the pain and suffering this has caused. I have been appalled by the distorted information about this that American citizens have been fed, and the brazen support of Israel's policies.

I am shocked our lawmakers would make such a proposal in this dire moment. I have serious concerns about this bill's lack of transparency, oversight, and return on investment for Ohio taxpayers. The legislation includes no clear benchmarks, performance reporting requirements, or community input mechanisms. The bill creates a board stacked with political appointees tied to pro-Israel organizations, explicitly excluding Palestinian, Arab-American, Muslim, and neutral voices. It contains no independent oversight, no competitive process, and no clear safeguards to ensure accountability or public benefit.

This is not just about trade. This is about values. Israel is currently under international investigation for crimes against humanity. A trade partnership now makes Ohio complicit.

I strongly believe Ohio's resources should stay in Ohio, to build up the economy of our own communities. Please have a conscience and stand for transparency, equity, and fiscal responsibility, and consider the people of Ohio who elected you—not foreign lobbyists—and to vote NO on HB 188.

Sincerely Peggy Gish