

October 27, 2025
Development Committee
Ohio House of Representatives

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Robin Beth Schaer, I am a resident of Shaker Heights, and I strongly oppose HB 188. This bill would funnel millions of taxpayer dollars into a foreign partnership with the State of Israel. This funding would be sent overseas at a time when Ohio communities are facing deep and debilitating cuts to libraries, schools, healthcare, infrastructure, and public services.

As a Jew, an educator, and the parent of a child in the Shaker Heights public schools, I am truly shocked and dismayed our leaders would even consider this proposal at 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.

As both an active member of the Jewish community and a scholar of Jewish history, I want to comment on the misinformation which the Jewish Federation, Ohio Jewish Communities, and similar pro-Israel organizations promote about the needs and positions of the larger Jewish community in Ohio. I want to be very clear that these organizations do not truly represent the Jewish community — they are run by high-paid executives; they are not led by clergy or democratically chosen community leaders. Most crucially, unequivocal support for Israel is a central mission of these organizations, a priority which dissolves the accuracy and honesty of their positions and statistics. Support for legislation to create a trade partnership with Israel is not about serving the needs of Jewish Ohioans but rather supporting the state of Israel.

Perhaps you have been told that investment in Israel helps the Jewish community and supports Jewish safety. While I appreciate the gesture of support, it is misplaced. The best way to support the Jewish community and our safety, is by taking care of the communities we live in here in Ohio — not Israel. As an American Jew, my home is the United States, not Israel. All of my own charitable donations and investments are made to the community I live in, not Israel or any other foreign country. I would expect that my own local government would similarly invest our money locally, not in a foreign country. 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, makes every one of us complicit.

You may also hear that criticism of Israel is antisemitic, so I want to clarify very simply that antisemitism is the hatred of Jews, not criticism of a political ideology or a government. The conflation of antisemitism with criticism of Israel, and conflations of Israel with Jewish identity, is a longstanding deliberate tactic to garner support for Israel and shield its crimes from criticism and debate.

This bill sets a dangerous precedent for how public funds are allocated and who is deemed worthy of access to state-backed economic initiatives. I respectfully ask you to consider: Why should our public dollars fund a foreign initiative when so many Ohio families, students, and workers are struggling? What legal, ethical, or financial safeguards are in place to prevent conflicts of interest or abuse of this funding? I strongly believe Ohio's resources should stay in Ohio, to build up the economy of our own communities. Please 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Beth Schaer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Robin Beth Schaer
Shaker Heights, OH