

Regarding proposed HB188

My wife and I, Suzanne and John Howell, residents of Athens, OH, strongly oppose HB 188. It would funnel millions of taxpayer dollars into a foreign partnership with the State of Israel. This bill is appalling! So, will we have separate Ohio government agencies for all 195 countries in the world, each with 11 members and its own budget? It is an utterly unacceptable expansion of bureaucracy at the expense of Ohio taxpayers for absolutely no justifiable reason.

This funding would be sent overseas at a time when my neighbors are facing deep cuts to food assistance via Snap cutbacks and well as cuts in other essential services, including libraries, schools, healthcare, and the areas physical infrastructure that is needed for a viable economy.

As a retired medical educator, 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. It is a dreadfully poorly written bill, a simple invitation to politically motivated corruption.

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,

John N. Howell, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Physiology Emeritus, Ohio University