

Witness statement from Bonnie Edwards, Athens, Ohio 45701. 740-541-2417.

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My statement is in written form only.

My name is Bonnie Edwards a resident of Athens, Ohio 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 cuts to libraries, schools, healthcare, infrastructure, and public services.

As a licensed mental health therapist, 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 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, *Bonnie Edwards*