

Good evening,

My name is Erica Montejo and I'm a home owner and registered voter in Cleveland Heights. I'm writing you to express my strong opposition to HB 188, as this bill's priorities are completely misaligned with the values and needs of Ohioans everywhere. Prioritizing funneling millions of taxpayer dollars into a foreign partnership with the State of Israel while communities in Ohio are facing deep cuts to our education systems, libraries, infrastructure, healthcare, and public services such as SNAP benefits is frankly abominable and I hope that you will vote your conscience by opposing this bill.

Our domestic needs here in Ohio are far more pressing than any partnership with any foreign entity. In a time when our federal government remains shut down and many of my neighbors are facing food insecurity due to a loss of federal SNAP benefits we have a responsibility to show up for each other and ensure that no Ohioan goes hungry by bridging this gap and allocating more funding to our food banks and food pantry programs. This funding proposed for Israel should instead be allocated to meeting our domestic needs, and frankly I'm appalled that Ohio lawmakers would make such a proposal in such a trying time for so many of their constituents.

I'm also deeply concerned about this bill's utter lack of transparency, oversight, and return on investment for Ohio taxpayers. This legislation contains no clear benchmarks, performance reporting requirements, or room for community input. This bill would create a board stacked with political appointees tied to pro-Israel organizations and explicitly excludes Palestinian, Arab-American, Muslim, and neutral voices. There is no independent oversight here; therefore there is no accountability here. This is dangerous. The International Court of Justice, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and countless other organizations and entities have all declared that Israel is committing war crimes in Palestine, and in no way shape or form do I support a single taxpayer dollar being sent out of Ohio to go toward such an inhumane endeavor.

All of this to say that I hope you'll stand for transparency, equity, and fiscal responsibility, and put your constituents here in Ohio first — not foreign lobbyists — and firmly vote NO on HB 188.

Thank you,
Erica Montejo