

My name is Laura Beans Sika, a resident of Lakewood, Ohio in Cuyahoga County and I strongly oppose HB 188.

This bill is a slap in the face – especially given the current state of affairs here in Ohio and America, as well as Israel. At a time when our social safety programs and public services are being stripped, the federal government is shutdown, prices of groceries are raising rapidly, schools are underfunded, this bill would funnel millions of taxpayer dollars into a foreign partnership with the State of Israel.

As a mother of two who works full time, along with my husband, so we can afford our mortgage, our childcare, our property taxes that keep rising, our groceries, our health insurance, I am shocked our lawmakers would make such a proposal. I have serious concerns about this bill's lack of transparency, oversight, and return on investment for Ohio taxpayers.

Additionally, I am deeply disturbed by the fact that HB 188 creates a board stacked with political appointees tied to pro-Israel organizations, explicitly excluding Palestinian, Arab-American, Muslim, and other unbiased individuals. It contains no independent oversight, no competitive process, and no guardrails to ensure accountability or public benefit.

Moreover, the fact that Israel is currently under international investigation for crimes against humanity. The tides are turning as the world sees Israel's military campaign for what it is: a genocide of a trapped population. A trade partnership like this would make Ohio complicit.

I strongly believe Ohio's resources should stay in Ohio, to build up the economy of our own communities. My hard-earned tax dollars should stay right here in my state, in my own country!

Israel already gets BILLIONS from American taxpayers – we pay their healthcare, their subsidized education, their economy, their military.

Please stand for transparency and equity and against corruption and consider the people of Ohio and vote NO on HB 188.

Sincerely,

Laura Beans Sika