

My name is Jenelle Vincent and I am a resident of Shaker Heights. I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 188. This bill opens the door to funnel millions of taxpayer dollars into a foreign partnership with the State of Israel. As someone who organizes around food justice in Cleveland, I can see so many places where our tax dollars could be used to help the community, especially with the latest SNAP cuts. This bill authorizes money for a relationship with Israel, which will take much-needed funding away from our own state.

Ohio communities are in desperate need for resources, as I have seen through my work as a nurse and a community organizer. This is not the time to be prioritizing a trade relationship with a country with a very unstable financial situation. This bill contains no independent oversight, no competitive process, and no clear safeguards to ensure accountability or public benefit. It also creates a biased board of political appointees who have vested interest in relationships with Israel but excludes Palestinian, Muslim, and Arab voices.

Most importantly, it disgusts me that our lawmakers are prioritizing a relationship with a foreign state that has been committing a genocide, as recognized by several organizations including Amnesty International, the United Nations, Doctors Without Borders, and the International Association for Genocide Scholars. A trade partnership with Israel signals Ohio's approval for these actions and makes Ohioans complicit in these human rights atrocities.

I strongly believe we should focus on Ohio's local economy and invest in resources and businesses in our own communities. Ohioans cannot meet their basic needs while this bill sends money and power to a foreign country. I urge the committee to reject HB 188.