

Loraine McCosker
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Dear Chair Jim Hoops and esteemed members of the Ohio General Assembly Development Committee,

Please allow me to introduce myself. This email is from Loraine McCosker, resident of Athens County, one of the 32 Appalachian counties in the state of Ohio, a county with 32% poverty. I am a retired Ohio University instructor and outreach coordinator, former public health nurse. I am a family farmer and an active community member. I write in opposition to HB 188, the Ohio-Israel Trade and Innovation Partnership. I strongly believe Ohio's resources should stay in Ohio, to build up the economy of our own communities.

We live in very complex times. We stand at the precipice of a calamity marching toward our economically stressed Ohio population, while living through a genocide perpetuated by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people. As such, these two issues are of great concern with this proposed partnership.

Let me explain my reasoning.

This Ohio legislation focuses on a deep relationship with the Israeli government while seemingly motivated to send funds abroad to Israel at a time when their economy is strained with credit downgrades, deficits and tech sector decline. This creates an unstable situation for Ohio taxpayers while neglecting the many demands we experience in times of extreme budget cuts in social services, education and infrastructure. This does not appear to be about jobs for Ohio but rather a limited transparency in economic relationship building with Israel. Israel has been accused of war crimes and human rights violations. Partnering Ohio's state government directly with Israel risks complicity and reputational harm to the state of Ohio.

While Ohio is facing cuts to food stamps (SNAP), schools, libraries, and infrastructure, HB 188 may funnel millions into an international political project. As taxpayers we know very little about this partnership and the relationships it will create economically and in

institutions as higher education. It is proposed that the lieutenant governor serve on the partnership. In addition, Commission members must have ties to pro-Israel groups, likely guaranteeing one-sided representation and silencing Palestinian and dissenting Ohio voices.

This legislation appears to be integrated with JobsOhio, a private nonprofit criticized for lack of transparency, furthering the discussion on public accountability and distribution of public funds.

I strongly request that you vote in opposition to HB 188. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Loraine McCosker