

Written Testimony of Jan Nespor, PhD  
Written Testimony on Am. Sub. H. B. No. 96  
State of Ohio  
Ohio Senate Finance Committee  
May 28, 2025

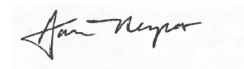
Chairperson Cirino, Vice-Chair Robb Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Finance Committee

My name is Jan Nespor, and I am a professor of Education Policy at the Ohio State University. I do not represent Ohio State, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to certain provisions in Am. Sub. H. B. No. 96.

In particular I urge the committee to reject Section 259.20, Item DEVCD22 under the Department of Development's budget (Line Item 195537), which allocates \$250,000 per year (totaling \$500,000 over two years) in public tax dollars to fund agricultural collaboration between Ohio and Israel. This program is managed by the Negev Foundation, a Cleveland-based nonprofit that describes its mission as "to build communities in the Negev region of Israel,"<sup>1</sup> through such actions as the destruction of Palestinian villages older than the state of Israel itself.<sup>2</sup> Although HB96 would prohibit using the funds for travel or entertainment, the real problem is that this is taxpayer money going to a foreign state—not Ohioans—while Ohio's libraries, schools, and public health programs face major cuts. This has nothing to do with a boycott or disinvestment – it has to do with the fact that Ohio's own rural communities and farming sectors are struggling and could benefit far more from these funds—especially in areas of Appalachian Ohio where infrastructure, food access, and climate resiliency are underfunded.

The Ohio-Israel Agriculture & CleanTech Initiative has been in operation for over two decades and its costs have far outweighed any benefits it might have had. It is time to put an end to public funding of this initiative

Sincerely,



Jan Nespor

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<sup>1</sup> <https://jobs.jpro.org/companies/the-negev-foundation/jobs/38620103-program-director-ohio-israel-ag-and-clean-tech-initiative> If you want to better understand the context in which this funding intervenes, I would also recommend Weizman, E. and Sheikh, F. (2015) *The Conflict Shoreline: Colonization as Climate Change in the Negev Desert*. Steidl.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-negev-court-removal-village-build-jewish-neighbourhood>