

Testimony on bill LD 1383

Thank you to Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members of the Committee for allowing me to speak today. While my in-person testimony will likely be shorter due to time constraints, the message will be the same. Allow me here to provide some background information as to why bill like this is so important to me, a CIS white man.

Before moving to Maine, I lived in New Hampshire where I was born and raised. I did however spend three years attending DePaul University in Chicago Illinois where I converted to Islam and served on the board of the school's Muslim Student Organization, which was an incredibly progressive and diverse community that followed strong woman leadership, with many immigrants and children of immigrants from all over the world, including Palestine, Somalia, and the Sudan. Through numerous cultural and interfaith events, as well as a courseload centered in middle eastern studies, including a course on Israel-Palestine from the renowned (and often abused) expert Dr. Norman Finklestine.

My brother is currently married to a Colombian woman and one of my sisters is married to a Puerto Rican man. My niece is half Puerto Rican. You may say, "but Puerto Rico is part of the USA" and my response is does that matter in a time when ICE is repeatedly detaining Native Americans. The answer is that it does not. ICE detains and loses people regularly. My niece could be one of those that falls through the cracks because she is brown skinned and bilingual. My brother is afraid to participate in pro-Democracy rallies because he doesn't want to jeopardize his wife's status.

The purpose of this bill is for statewide divestment from corporations that contribute to Genocide and Human Rights Abuses. The most glaring examples are companies that cooperate with ICE and companies that send arms to further genocides in Palestine, the Sudan and perpetuate human rights atrocities across the globe. There are also less talked about examples that include both weapon testing that causes cancer and contraceptive testing that causes infertility in Puerto Rico.

Signing this bill is a no-brainer for anyone with a conscience. It is a moral imperative. History will be on the side of those that stood up against this administration. This of course will lead to an accountability phase and all complicit, including corporation and politician, will phase legal ramifications for collaboration. As these corporations and war criminals fall, it also makes it the smart financial decision to invest and support companies that the people want to support. Companies that worked with ICE and assisted in genocide will be blacklisted and closed down, whereas ethical companies will weather the storm and grow.

At the end of the day, however, the legal ramifications and the profit aspect of entering relationships with ethical companies should be secondary motivators. Being on the right side of history is paramount and it is clear for anyone with eyes which side that is. There is a saying in politics, "As goes Maine, so goes the nation." It sounds to me like Maine signing this bill is an important step in the Nation landing on the right side of history.

Thank you,

Christopher Claar

Resident of Gray, Maine