

Good morning,

My name is Sass Borodkin, I live in Skowhegan, and I'm testifying today in favor of LD 1383 An Act to Require the State to Divest Itself of Assets Invested in Corporations that Contribute to Genocide and Human Rights Abuses.

I am a person who is part of the Jewish diaspora. My great grandparents came over here to flee persecution and escape from the ensuing Holocaust, and as a result I have no sense of ancestral connection to the land I stand on. I also have no connection to the part of my family who stayed behind and no ability to speak the language of my people, which was lost in just two generations of my family being in the US.

It's not a small thing. Land holds culture and language shapes the way we are in relationship with the world around us.

An example I love to point toward is how the closest translation in the Penobscot language to the English phrase: "rights to the River" equates to the phrase: "responsibilities to the River." That little tweak – that lack of a word for "rights," entirely changes the way Penobscot people exist with the River. Instead of dominion there is relationship. And both the River and the people benefit from that cultural shaping.

I do not have the benefit of being shaped by my own culture's language because genocide took that from me, and from my children. And, frankly, that's the least of what it took from my family.

I've grown up hearing one story after another about the devastation of genocide on my people. The way it took out the storytellers and the healers, the teachers, and the people everyone else relied on. And worst of all, the children, and the healthier futures they may have held without the trauma.

Not investing in corporations that help perpetuate genocide feels like the floor to me. And, I think our state has done an incredible job of showing the rest of the country what it can look like when people genuinely want to pave the way to something better, and particularly in the framing of human rights.

This bill also divests from corporations that help to support the work of ICE, which also feels like the floor at this point. The so called Big Beautiful Bill slashed funding for children to eat and gave a bloated amount of money to an organization that is ripping families apart, terrorizing communities, and killing people. We need to be on the right side of history.

And, if the ethical implications of that argument don't move you, let the legal and financial implications do the job. History will not look back kindly on states who invested in the destruction of people and communities. Divesting from these investments is not just the right thing to do, it's the responsible thing to do.

Thanks for listening.