

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee,

My name is Lorin Trodeman. I am a resident of St. George and the rabbi at Rockland's Adas Yoshuron Synagogue, which includes over 100 families in Knox, Waldo, and Lincoln counties. **I am writing to oppose LD 1383.**

This testimony is mine alone and not that of the Synagogue or its Board, but many of our congregants also oppose LD 1383. Under the stress of rising antisemitism, they are fearful of being public with their views. This proposed legislation may well lead to further divisiveness within communities and to more acts of antisemitism targeting those perceived to be connected, even remotely, to Israel.

While on the surface this legislation seems to be congruent with the core Jewish values I hold dear -- peace, justice, and human dignity – its components betray these values. The vague notion of a country being “credibly accused” is troubling and a political and policy landmine. The bill relies on United Nations and International Criminal Court decisions that have been inconsistent, politically expedient, and often ignore serious abusers who remain unscathed. Furthermore, this bill will bind Maine to rely on Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, which also have documented biases against Israel, as sources of who is “credibly accused.” In short, LD 1383 is undemocratic, unjust, and manipulative, will not help resolve the challenges of the people living in or near the countries targeted, and does not serve the mission interests and beneficiaries of the MainePERS (Maine Public Employee Retirement System) nor the needs of the people of Maine.

Although this bill does not name Israel, few, if any, of its supporters have mentioned divesting from any other country. If the standards are applied fairly, this bill will be a historic disaster, forcing Maine to divest from companies associated with the United States and China—which also have been “credibly accused” of gross human rights violations, the bill’s standard for divestment. LD 1383 will open up the state to divisive, costly, and unnecessary litigation, encourage hatred toward the state’s Jewish community at a time of skyrocketing antisemitism, and put Maine in a negative national spotlight for years to come.

In these extraordinary times, with toxic polarization distracting the state from addressing the vital needs of Mainers, this legislation is worse than a distraction. I urge you to focus on Maine’s essential needs, allow the retirement fund to attend to its core fiduciary responsibilities, help our communities to focus their energy on the myriad of challenges they face daily, and **vote against LD 1383.**

With gratitude and humility,
Lorin Troderman