

Written Testimony against
LD 1383
Joanne Rosenthal

I am writing to express my opposition to LD 1383. Many in the Jewish community are concerned that if LD 1383 is enacted, it would have the effect of promoting further bias against Maine Jews and detract from the desperately needed problem solving and resources to ensure that Mainer's basic human rights are met.

In many cases, promoters of this bill have been long time advocates of the "Boycott, Divest & Sanction, (BDS) movement which offers a one-sided picture of a very complex situation in the Middle East. If enacted, the bill would require that Maine divest from companies in countries that have been "credibly accused" of gross human rights violations. Based on meeting the qualification criteria, the following countries would potentially qualify for divestment:

- Myanmar
- Sudan
- China
- Russia
- Syria
- Israel/Palestine
- Saudi Arabia/Yemen
- Ethiopia
- Eritrea
- Sri Lanka
- Azerbaijan/Armenia
- Turkey
- United States

Although this bill does not explicitly name Israel, there are few supporters of this bill seeking to divest from any country but Israel. LD 1383 is being promoted by an anti-Israel coalition, some of whom have gone so far as to deny the atrocities committed by Hamas on October 7th. In affect, this bill will heighten the tension between the pro Palestine and pro Israel coalitions.

Maine has a constitutional duty to make responsible investment decisions and these decisions must remain accountable to state financial services - not to organizations with documented histories of anti Israel bias.

There is a through line from organizations that don't believe in Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation, to the surging of antisemitism in Maine and world wide. Just a few of those recent Maine incidences include:

- Multiple Jewish organizations receiving death threats including letters say, "I will kill all at this place for Russia and Palestine"
- Hundreds of emails sent to USM educators saying "The fight against Jewry is the most noble fight that ever existed."

- Swastikas painted in my town and throughout Maine
- And many more hate crimes, documented in the Anti-defamation Leagues (ADL) incident report.

As you know, we are living in a time of heightened threats towards many different faiths, cultures and gender orientations. This dangerous bill would add fuel to the sentiments of those with an agenda that does not represent what most Mainers want and need. At this time with acute health, education and infrastructure needs, LD 1383 would distract from Maine's priorities while shifting resources into expensive, labor intensive administrative tasks combing through human rights reports from biased international bodies.

I sincerely hope that you will vote against the impractical, unworkable and divisive LD 1383, and recommit to focusing on what Maine needs and making our state a safe haven for all.

Respectively,
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