

Testimony of Jonathan Eastman Brown
Harpwell, Maine
In Support of LD 1383
An Act to Require State Divestment from Perpetrators of International Human Rights Violations
Presented by Representative Macias of Topsham, House District 51

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury and members of the Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Jonathan Brown, and I am testifying on my own personal time in support of LD 1383, An Act to Require State Divestment from Perpetrators of International Human Rights Violations.

LD1383 presents an opportunity for members of this committee, the Maine State Legislature, and the Governor to uplift a stronger moral code of conduct by prohibiting public investments or procurement contracts with entities that have committed crimes of apartheid, ethnic cleansing, genocide or war crimes.

I was born, raised, and educated in the State of Maine. Maine is my home. There are countless reasons that led me to stay here: the natural beauty, the fresh air, the clean water, my family's deep roots, the state's respect of individual liberties, and the tight-knit communities that look out for one another. We Mainers value peace. We value tranquility. We value respect. We value liberty. In my upbringing, and I suspect I am not alone here, I was taught to live and uphold the "Golden Rule", treat others as you would want to be treated. This bill presents Maine the chance to further codify this moral code into our social contract, Maine State Law.

Section 1 of the Maine State Constitution's first article states "All people are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent and unalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and of pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness." I believe LD 1383 provides an opportunity for this body to uphold your oaths to this provision of our state's constitution.

There is no community, no state, no country which I can comfortably live in knowing that public dollars are investing in companies, entities, individuals, or financial institutions that benefit financially from war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or genocide. I am dumbfounded that here in 2026, this is even a question that warrants consideration, nonetheless opposition. I find it deeply troubling to think anyone in the United States of America, the supposed leader of the free world, or in my home state would work to stand in the way of advancing legislation that cuts financial ties with groups who profit from the most reprehensible and evil examples of human behavior.

As lawmakers and representatives of my State Government, you hold immense influence on the footprints the State of Maine leaves in this world. I believe you all have a moral duty and constitutional obligation in the Dirigo State to continue blazing the trail toward human liberation wherever you can. I believe this obligation extends to staunchly oppose any form of complicity, or financing the violation of human rights, whether domestic or abroad.

I am not a professional investor, but I have no doubt in my mind that we have a long, long list of alternative investment opportunities in the world's markets where MainePERS can secure profitable returns. As a State, let's ensure Maine's investment returns are coming from ethical sources which support and advance the well-being of human civilization. You have the power to do this by voting for an ought to pass report on LD 1383 to prohibit my tax dollars and your tax dollars from contributing to ruthless bloodshed and untethered butchery of men, women, and children in the modern world.

There is a fork in the road before you and the rest of the 132nd legislature. This is a moral test. From this year forward, will you work to guarantee that Maine's tax dollars will not finance apartheid, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and war crimes? Or not?

Thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions.