

January 21, 11am

LD 1383, An Act To Require the State To Divest Itself of Assets Invested in Corporations That Contribute to Genocide and Human Rights Abuses

Hello, I'm Kian Lavi, a Persian Jew living in Maine, and supporting LD 1383 feels very personal for me. I'm actively watching my Persian community be massacred in Iran by their own government on a daily basis. Since October 2023, I have watched the Israeli state commit what a plurality of countries recognized as a genocide in Gaza, all in the name of my "self-defense" as a Jew. I am watching ICE agents scuttle and disappear my neighbors in the name of my own safety and border defense. War crimes are not a boogeyman to be thrown around loosely — we are witnessing them happening in real-time all around us, from Minneapolis to Tehran. We are similarly watching corporations profit from our discord.

I appeal to you on simple, economic terms — there are simply more sound ways to invest the State of Maine's funds than in propping up institutions that profit off of war, terror, genocide, or ethnic cleansing. Thanks to LD 99, we already have chosen to align our public investments with our values, divesting from fossil fuels and for-profit prisons. I am not asking the state to do something it has not already considered. Why should we invest in weapons manufacturers, or in the development of detention centers? We know intuitively that these institutions only bring about more economic destabilization, more societal disruption and destruction. 1-2% of our pension funds currently invest in companies like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Palantir. Surely we could reallocate that 1-2% in any other industry and still make sound investments for our pension funds.

In response to South Africa's Apartheid, we divested in complicit corporations. In response to genocide in Darfur, we divested from Sudan in 2010. We are not asking the state to do something it has not already considered.

My ancestors left Iran because they were afraid of persecution as Jews. I stand here as a Jew that is still afraid — afraid for all of our persecution, often at the hands of our own governments. What little power I do have, I hope I can convey to you how simply your economic decisions affect real lives for me and my neighbors in Portland. How much our safety is bought by your investments.

Please support LD 1383.