

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE ON LD 1383
CHRIS MYERS ASCH, JANUARY 21, 2026

Good afternoon Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Salisbury, and members of the committee:

My name is Chris Myers Asch and I am from Hallowell. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today in strong opposition to LD 1383. I oppose this bill because it is deceptive, divisive, and distracting.

I know and respect many of the people who are sponsoring and supporting this bill. As someone who has spent most of his adult life working to promote racial equality and help immigrants thrive in our state, I understand why some of you may feel sympathetic to the bill. Who, after all, would want to be on the side of genocide? I certainly am not. But that is not what this bill is about.

THIS BILL IS DECEPTIVE.

Let's be honest: this bill is about Israel. Supporters have removed references to Israel from the text, but you don't have to look very hard online to see that the bill is part of a well-funded, well-organized effort to delegitimize Israel and undermine its standing in the world. The bill aims to enlist the Maine State Legislature in a war against the world's only Jewish majority nation. Few of the bill's supporters want it to be used to divest from China, Sudan, Syria, the United States, or any of the dozen countries that have been "credibly accused" of genocide and other crimes recently. No. Its target is Israel, and we should be honest about it.

THAT'S WHY THIS BILL IS SO DIVISIVE.

When political leaders single out foreign nations to demonize – whether by calling them “garbage” or “genocidal” – they sow division and anger, and they encourage discrimination against people connected to those countries. Somali Mainers know this all too well, and Jewish Mainers do too. After Hamas's horrific attack on Oct. 7, 2023 – the worst attack on Jews since the Holocaust – my Facebook feed bloomed with activist friends celebrating, even before the bodies of the 1200 dead were buried. “We are all Hamas,” they cheered during a protest at my alma mater. “Globalize the intifada!” they yelled. And that's precisely what we have seen, as Jews have been targeted from Australia to Augusta. Since Oct. 7, within a one-mile radius of where we are sitting today, Maine Jews have endured antisemitic graffiti on the walls of Cony High School, bomb threats that canceled our temple's Hebrew School, anti-Israel slogans chalked on the driveway outside our temple, and swastikas spray-painted in a local park. After Oct. 7, I spoke up in defense of Israel and the hostages, and I received vile emails, hateful accusations, and calls to have me fired from my job. This kind of vitriol is part of why so many opponents of this bill do not want to come out publicly against it. This bill only stokes these divisions and does nothing for the people of Maine.

AND THAT'S THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH THIS BILL — IT IS DISTRACTING.

This bill distracts us from what our state representatives should be focusing on: Maine and the needs of our people. We have a long list of issues – housing, mental health, the closing of rural hospitals, soaring energy costs – that desperately need attention, particularly given recent cuts in federal grants to our state. We do not want our state officials wading into foreign policy while our state's needs go unmet. My sense is that the vast majority of your constituents would want you to focus on Maine's needs, not Middle East foreign policy.

This is a deceptive, distracting, and divisive bill. I urge you to reject it.