

LD 1383

TESTIMONY OF AMY SELTZMAN TINKLE

My name is Amy Seltzman Tinkle and I'm a long-time resident of Portland. As a Portland citizen, this bill gives me a certain sense of déjà vu. Just a couple of years ago, the same anti-Israel coalition behind LD 1383 rammed a similar divestment measure through the Portland City Council. It was widely seen as a slap in the face against the Jewish community and the Christian pro-Israel community. Many Portland Jews suddenly felt unwelcome in the City and developed a deep resentment against the councilors who voted for the resolution. Some even vowed to stop patronizing Portland businesses.

To his credit, our mayor, when he realized the harm the resolution was causing, publicly apologized for signing it and acknowledged that it was a mistake.

The key difference between that resolve and LD 1383 is that this bill doesn't specifically refer to Israel. Instead, it cherry-picks organizations with a known anti-Israel bias like the UN and Amnesty International and ties divestment to their anti-Zionist critiques, while ignoring the many experts who have concluded that Israel has acted appropriately in responding to a genocidal massacre by Hamas and thousands of other acts of terrorism.

If it is passed, this bill, like the Portland measure, will alienate a substantial swath of Maine residents. It will be enormously divisive. It will cause many if not most Jews to feel unwelcome here. At a time of rising antisemitism, it will inflame anti-Israel and anti-Jewish hatred, endangering the safety of the Jewish community. It will deter Jewish businesses and non-residents from moving or investing here. It will lead to protracted and costly litigation.

It will not benefit Maine people in any way. To the contrary, it will harm Maine employees by stripping their retirement portfolios of high performing stocks in such companies as Microsoft, IBM, Oracle, Alphabet, NVIDIA, General Electric and dozens more that do business with Israel. And if the aim of the bill is to somehow put pressure on Israel, it's simply delusional to think that taking stocks out of the state's retirement fund is going to have any effect on Israeli policy.

I urge the Legislature to focus on the state's real problems and consign this bill to the ash heap where it belongs.