

Hannah Leitzell
Bath
LD 1383

An Act to Require State Divestment from Perpetrators of International Human Rights Violations - LD1383, Written Testimony for January 21, 11:00 a.m.

Good morning Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Hannah Leitzell and I am a resident of Bath, Maine. I ardently support LD1383, the bill to divest Maine's state pension fund from companies complicit in genocide and human rights violations. For multiple years now I have watched firsthand videos and photographs of evidence of the human rights abuses in places like Gaza, Sudan, and the Congo; genocides and violence funded and supported by American companies and American tax dollars. It is sickening to think of how long it has taken to financially restrict these acts of violence despite widespread disapproval for the actions of occupiers like the Israeli government. Palestinians are starved, injured, and killed by the brutal Israeli Defense Forces, and American tax dollars have aided and abetted the unjust violence faced by Palestinian men, women, and children in Gaza. International and American laws have done nothing to prevent American financial support to states violating human rights, and have done nothing to break the blockades preventing life-saving aid, food, medicine, or other supplies from entering Gaza. Tens of billions of tax-payer dollars have been sent to Israel in the form of missiles, bullets, bombs, and other lethal weapons in order to murder Palestinians (including, most horrifically, Palestinian children). There are no hospitals left in Gaza, there are no universities or schools left in Gaza, families have been forced to reside in inhospitable conditions without food or water for months on end; what atrocities will finally force our government to recognize these human rights violations and stop abetting these horrors in places like Gaza and otherwise? What will our children say when the histories show our cowardice, our wont to do anything and everything to ignore the fact that we are complicit in the genocide of human beings? Maine funds are being used to support companies like Palantir, Boeing, and Signature Aviation, all of which are complicit in human rights violations. Our state tax dollars should be spent representing the views of Mainers, most of whom vehemently oppose the human rights violations of states like Israel. Our state investments should benefit Mainers, and spread positivity to the world instead of fueling companies which spread terror and hate, and abet the detention of American citizens (our neighbors!) and genocide abroad. Neutrality is a political action, and not an action I am comfortable with my state representatives taking in issues of human rights. We as Mainers must be opposed to human rights violations anywhere in the world and cannot in good conscience continue to allow our taxes to fund genocidal and abusive campaigns. I have no desire to continue feeling complicit in horrific atrocities being committed by organizations like ICE and the IDF, but if my money (especially money invested in MPERS) continues to be invested the way it has been, I will not be able to avoid the guilt of complicity. Maine needs to act as we have historically, as during the Apartheid in South Africa, when funds were divested, or our divestment from Sudan following the Darfur genocide. These precedents make me proud to be a Mainer; Maine is a place where state and local governments listen to their constituents and divesting from companies complicit in human rights abuses is a step in the right direction for continuing Maine's trend of standing up for humans who are vulnerable to state-sanctioned violence both here and abroad. Please strongly consider this bill as not only financial action, but ethical action against genocide and human rights violations. Mainers deserve to not feel complicit in genocides just for investing in their retirement. I strongly recommend your support for this bill.

Sincerely,
Hannah Leitzell - Bath resident