



# HoCo JAG

Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group

## **HB1455 – UNFAVORABLE**

**Written Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 1455**

**Hearing Date: March 19, 2026**

**Submitted by the Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group**

**Before the Maryland General Assembly House Appropriations Committee**

**Summary: HB1455 singles out the world’s only Jewish state for selective economic exclusion, risks exacerbating antisemitism, and misuses Maryland’s pension system for geopolitical advocacy.**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Committee,

The Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group respectfully submits this written testimony in opposition to House Bill 1455. The bill would require the Board of Trustees of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System to divest investments connected to Israel and prohibit future investments connected to Israeli companies or entities.

HB1455 raises serious concerns because it singles out the world’s only Jewish state for selective economic exclusion not applied to any other nation, misuses state pension assets for geopolitical advocacy, and risks exacerbating antisemitism at a time when antisemitic incidents are already rising.

HB1455 asks the Maryland pension system to serve as a vehicle for an international political campaign rather than its core mission of securing retiree benefits.

**For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to give House Bill 1455 an unfavorable report.**

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### **1. HB1455 Uniquely and Unfairly Singles Out the World’s Only Jewish State**

HB1455 uniquely targets Israel, the world’s only Jewish state, for selective economic exclusion not applied to any other nation.

The bill does not address investments connected to any other country. It does not require divestment from investments related to governments involved in severe human-rights crises throughout the Middle East, Africa, Asia, or elsewhere. Instead, it isolates a single nation for economic exclusion.

When legislation singles out the only Jewish state while ignoring far more serious crises elsewhere in the world, it raises legitimate concerns about discriminatory treatment.

Maryland has long sought to ensure that public policy treats individuals and nations fairly and without discrimination; legislation that selectively isolates the Jewish state for economic exclusion undermines this principle.

## **2. HB1455 Risks Contributing to Rising Antisemitism**

Maryland is home to a large and vibrant Jewish community whose institutions increasingly require heightened security due to antisemitic threats.

Antisemitism is a serious and growing problem both nationally and in Maryland. When FBI hate-crime data are normalized by population, Jews experience hate and bias crimes at a higher per-capita rate than any other identifiable group tracked in the United States — both nationally and in Maryland.

During this period of increased antisemitic activity, legislation that singles out the Jewish state for economic exclusion contributes to a climate in which hostility toward Jewish communities becomes normalized.

Public policy should seek to reduce division, not intensify it.

## **3. HB1455 Conflicts with Maryland's Existing Anti-Discrimination Policy**

Maryland has already adopted policies discouraging discriminatory boycotts of Israel. [Executive Order 01.01.2017.25](#) prohibits the State from entering into procurement contracts with companies that participate in such boycotts.

HB1455 moves Maryland in the opposite direction by directing the State's largest public investment fund to participate in the very type of economic exclusion that existing state policy seeks to discourage. State policy should remain consistent in opposing discriminatory boycotts.

## **4. HB1455 Misuses the State Pension System for Geopolitical Advocacy**

The Maryland State Retirement and Pension System exists to secure the retirement benefits of hundreds of thousands of public employees and retirees. Its investment

strategy is designed to achieve long-term stability through diversified global investments managed by professional investment staff and advisors.

HB1455 would require the pension system to identify and divest investments “connected to Israel.” Because modern pension portfolios invest through global funds and commingled investment vehicles containing thousands of underlying securities, determining which investments fall within such a mandate would require complex screening, ongoing monitoring, and significant administrative effort.

Once the General Assembly begins mandating pension divestment based on geopolitical disputes, it becomes difficult to establish principled limits. Advocacy campaigns could seek similar legislation targeting investments connected to numerous countries around the world. The pension system should not be placed in the position of responding to recurring political campaigns regarding international disputes unrelated to its core mission or that threaten domestic antidiscrimination policies benefitting other protected classes.

HB1455 also reflects a broader pattern of legislation introduced in recent sessions that seeks to single out Israel — the world’s only Jewish state — for economic or political exclusion. Repeated efforts of this kind risk turning the General Assembly into a venue for selective geopolitical campaigns rather than focusing on matters that directly affect the people of Maryland.

Maryland’s public institutions should remain focused on serving all residents fairly and without discrimination. The State’s retirement system should not be drawn into divisive international political campaigns that fall outside its mission and risk deepening divisions within Maryland communities.

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## **Conclusion**

HB1455 would misuse Maryland’s pension system for a selective geopolitical campaign that singles out the world’s only Jewish state for economic exclusion. At a time of rising antisemitism, legislation that isolates Israel in this manner risks contributing to division while imposing unnecessary administrative burdens on the State’s retirement system.

Maryland’s laws should bring communities together and uphold principles of fairness and nondiscrimination — not single out the Jewish state for economic exclusion.

**For these reasons, the Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group respectfully urges the Committee to give House Bill 1455 an unfavorable report.**

Respectfully submitted,

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