

Austin Reid

Testimony in Support of Ohio House Bill 476

Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

December 7th, 2016

Chairman Coley and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee:

It is an honor to speak before this committee. My name is Austin Reid, and I am a junior at Capital University, and I currently serve as President of the Capital Jewish Student Association. In addition, I am affiliated with StandWithUs as a StandWithUs Emerson Fellow. As many of you may recall, this past March saw the issue of BDS raised at two campuses right here in Columbus, The Ohio State University and Capital University. At Ohio State a resolution endorsing BDS was proposed by certain individuals to the Student Senate, but was ultimately rejected by the body. At Capital University the BDS movement was approached through a different lens.

In response to events in the Columbus community last spring, most notably the attack on Nazareth Restaurant & Deli back in February, and to the larger issue of increasing anti-Jewish events on campuses across the United States^[1], Capital's Student Government voted unanimously on March 22nd to pass a resolution condemning these occurrences, of which the BDS movement was declared a manifestation.

The resolution referenced the antisemitic "official political platform and... statements of its leaders regarding its goals as a movement". The true aims of BDS become clear when you listen to the movement's leaders in their own words:

"Ending the occupation doesn't mean anything if it doesn't mean upending the Jewish state itself...BDS does mean the end of the Jewish state." -Ahmed Moor, Pro-BDS Author

"BDS represents three words that will help bring about the defeat of Zionist Israel and victory for Palestine." -Ronnie Kasrils

“The real aim of BDS is to bring down the state of Israel....That should be stated as an unambiguous goal. There should not be any equivocation on the subject. Justice and freedom for the Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the state of Israel.”-As’ad AbuKhalil

Within the United States, some supporters of the BDS movement have taken to issuing threats of violence against persons or organizations advocating for open academic and/or business ties to Israel. For example, at the University of Michigan at least one pro-Israel student received death threats from proponents of the BDS movement, and others were allegedly targeted with ethnic slurs^[2]. At The Ohio State University, as Student Government representatives were debating the resolution to endorse BDS, one BDS supporter tweeted, “Yo, if USG messes this up tomorrow I’m coming for everyone’s life tomorrow^[3].”

It is clear that BDS is in no way conducive to a healthy campus environment. This reality is also made clear by a recent study linking BDS activity on college campuses to higher reported incidences of anti-semitic activity^[4]. It is for these reasons that Capital’s Student Government representatives moved to declare the BDS movement as a whole an unacceptable manifestation of anti-semitism.

The BDS Movement hurts the very people it purports to help.

It is more about animus towards the Jews and Israel than about rectifying the plight of the Palestinians.

Thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank are employed by Israeli-owned firms. Such enterprises serve as vivid examples of coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians and hold out hope for the future. If the boycotts have their desired effect, thousands of Palestinians will be unemployed. Soda Stream, the very public target of the boycott movement, once employed about 500 Palestinians, who worked side-by-side with Israelis at wages about 3 times the prevailing rate in the area. Soda Stream finally moved and Palestinians lost. Not a single Palestinian is better off today without Soda Stream.

The ultimate cost of the boycott movement is that it brings us further and further from any hope for a peaceful resolution, and that is a price my generation and future generations will pay.

In addition to sending a message across the State of Ohio that the economic warfare against the only democratic state in the Middle East, House Bill 476 will work to protect the meaningful ties which already exist between Ohioan and Israeli businesses. These connections can be seen across the state from Cincinnati, where Teva Pharmaceuticals currently hosts a large production center and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, which works extensively with Israeli medical institutions, to Cleveland, where the Cleveland Clinic just increased its cooperation with Israeli doctors. In

addition, both Akron and Dayton are working extensively with Israeli institutions, particularly in the area of water technologies. Finally, Ohio's relationship to Israel extends beyond the cities into rural areas as well through the efforts of the Ohio Israel Agricultural Initiative.

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to approve this bill today and help defend students, communities, and all Ohians from ethnic and religious discrimination.

Thank you so much for your time, and I am happy to take any questions.

[1]"ADL Voices Concern About Increase in Anti-Semitic and Anti-Israel Activity on Campus." www.adl.org. Anti-Defamation League, 29 May 2015. Web. 17 May 2016.

[2] Levitt, Joshua. "Jewish Students Report Intimidation as BDS Battle Ignites at University of Michigan." www.Algemeiner.com. The Algemeiner, 25 Mar. 2014. Web. 17 May 2016.

[3] Pessin, Andrew. "After Congressional Intervention, Death Threat, Ohio State Student Gov't Rejects BDS Resolution." www.Algemeiner.com. The Algemeiner, 24 Mar. 2016. Web. 17 May 2016.

[4] "Report Links Boycott Movement and Anti-Semitism | Inside Higher Ed." www.insidehighered.com. Inside Higher Ed, 15 Mar. 2016. Web. 17 May 2016.