

To: Ohio House Leadership

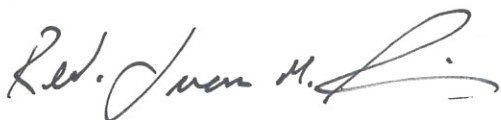
First, thank you for all you do to make Ohio a great place to live, learn, worship, build businesses and families. I am the senior pastor of a growing congregation called New Life Church in Youngstown. My wife and I serve over 500 wonderful families who, in turn, serve generously in our community. Beyond providing local leadership, I am also a board member of the Latino Affairs Commission for the State of Ohio. Together, we work tirelessly to promote the family, health, education, and financial stewardship to Ohioans of Hispanic/Latino origins. On a national level, I also have the privilege of serving on the national board of directors for the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. The Hispanic Evangelical Association represents over 40,000 churches nationwide and we serve the fastest growing demographic in America, i.e., the Latino/American. The reasons I am proud to be an Ohioan are too numerous to count, however, I realize that those reasons are largely due in great part by the good leadership you all provide. For that my family and I thank you.

Secondly, we have an opportunity to join other states, like Arizona and Florida, to lead with HB 476. Co-sponsoring HB 476, will prohibit state contracts to any business or entity that engages in BDS against Israel or Israelis. Supporting HB 476 sends a strong message to Israeli companies, researchers, academics, and businesses that Ohio is open for business. And it tells Israel that Ohio stands with them against terror and hate and for peace.

This is an issue for all Ohioans of all faiths, not just the Jewish (or even pro-Israel) communities. As a Christian leader, I am committed to fighting against all forms of bigotry and injustices in our communities. We are successful in this endeavor only to the degree that we continue to learn and build relationships with all peoples of all faiths and backgrounds.

At the heart of our country stands a state called Ohio and I know, through experience, that at the "heart" of our country we do not promote or tolerate any forms of discrimination, injustice, or anti-Semitism of any form. Our state of Ohio is a great leader in our nation and I am asking you to lead on this issue HB 476.

Submitted with sincerity and respect,



Rev. Juan M. Rivera