

Jason Wuliger  
HB 476 Proponent Testimony  
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My name is Jason Wuliger and I'm a lay leader with the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, which, along with its sixteen beneficiary agencies is among the largest social and human services agencies in Ohio. I'm a member of the Board of Directors, and I co-chair the Israel Advocacy Task Force. I'm also a 5th generation Ohioan and a small business owner. I'm here to ask you to strongly support House Bill 476.

Israel is an innovator. Not so long ago, they had an agricultural economy, and their chief export was oranges. Today Israel is a world leader in many technologies, and has more startups per capita than any other country in the world. It is little wonder that it's been nicknamed the Startup Nation. Their penchant for innovation and problem solving has led international corporations to create accelerator programs and research and development centers in Israel. Microsoft, Apple, and Intel are just a few of the tech giants that have established a presence there. The Israelis have taken a land with limited natural resources, made a desert bloom, invented technologies we use each day, and been leaders in cybersecurity, digital health and medical technologies.

I'll repeat that: agritech, fintech, cybertech, health tech, and just plain old tech.

They have accomplished what we are working toward in Ohio. As we continue to grow our economy through programs like Third Frontier or JobsOhio, we could benefit from closer cooperation with our Israeli peers. Ohio needs cutting edge partners in all the areas in which Israel excels both to tackle the problems we are currently facing, like

combating harmful algal blooms and growing fresh food in urban food deserts, as well as to help us have the tech transformation they are currently experiencing.

Ohio needs Israel.

Of course, this is not all theoretical. Ohio is already benefiting from Israeli innovation. An Israeli company, Woosh, is now in Dayton, helping to purify drinking water from the tap to reduce the need for bottled water. Back home in Cleveland, an innovative nanotech project is being run by Case Western & Hebrew University.

Also, our hospitals and universities have gained valuable research dollars – and projects – due to cooperation with Israel and Israeli institutions.

All of that in both business and academia – and much more - is what Ohio stands to lose if boycotts would occur.

In fact, everyone loses with BDS, even the Palestinians they claim they are trying to help. To see what I mean, one need only look at the example of SodaStream. SodaStream is an international company, listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange. They sell home carbonation systems so you can make seltzer or soda at home for a fraction of the cost and with a much smaller environmental footprint.

They built a factory in the West Bank and employed Israelis and Palestinians side by side. They provided good-paying jobs for Palestinians. They were a shining example of the benefits of peace and cooperation. However, the supporters of BDS claimed that the location of the factory was wrong and organized an international campaign against the company. Unable to withstand the economic pressure,

SodaStream reluctantly moved its factory out of the West Bank, and hundreds of Palestinians lost their jobs.

As you can see, BDS is not about helping anyone. They are the modern brand name of anti-semitism looking to do damage to Israel and Israelis no matter who else they hurt along the way. Supporting this bill will send a clear message that Ohio will not allow itself to ever become a party to it.

If you're pro-peace, pass this bill.

If you're pro-jobs and investment in Ohio, pass this bill.

And if you care about innovation to make our state, nation, and the world healthier and cleaner, pass this bill.

Thank you. I'm happy to take questions.

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