



# Agudath Israel of Maryland

**MID-ATLANTIC REGION**

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## STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE HEALTH & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEES

### HOUSE BILL 949 PROCUREMENT AND PENSIONS - STATE SANCTIONS DISCRIMINATORY BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL

**FEBRUARY 28, 2017**

#### **SUPPORT**

Agudath Israel of Maryland, the regional office of Agudath Israel of America, is a non-profit organization that represents the interests and concerns of the Orthodox Jewish community on matters of government affairs and public policy in Maryland and across the country.

We issue this testimony in strong **SUPPORT** of House Bill 949.

House Bill 949 seeks to prevent the harmful and discriminatory boycott of Israel, undertaken by the international movement known as BDS (Boycott Divestment and Sanctions), from having a foothold in Maryland. The BDS movement epitomizes unfairness and treachery by spreading falsehoods about the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict and grossly misusing the term, apartheid. It does not seek to advance a mutually acceptable peaceful resolution to the conflict in Israel and the region. Rather it seeks to isolate Israel on all levels from any association with the global community, including education, economics, culture, and foreign relations. In truth, the movement serves as a mask for a greater anti-Semitic agenda that its supporters stand behind.

House Bill 949 seeks to halt the movement's nefarious goals by preventing Maryland's retirement and pension system from doing business and securing procurement contracts with companies that engage in discriminatory and bigoted boycotts, divestments, or sanctions against the State of Israel.

As Jews, we maintain constant concern for Israel's safety and well-being. As Marylanders, we point to the strong similarities that our state and that of Israel have in regards to its stance on diversity and tolerance of faiths, ethnicities, and cultures. Dating back to its birth close to 70 years ago, Israel has been the lone democracy in the Middle East, and has been one of the most trusted allies of the United States. In return, Israel has benefited from its close relationship with the United States and many of its individual states.

With the passage of House Bill 949, Maryland can join a growing number of like-minded states who see through the mask of hatred promoted by the BDS movement and have taken the initiative to do their part in preventing it from making a stronger impact.

We hope you will find House Bill 949 **FAVORABLE**. Thank you.