

May 4, 2017  
Proponent Testimony: HB 2409  
Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee

My name is Margie Robinow.

I have lived in Kansas for 21 years.

I am a Mom of five, grandma of two.

I have worked for 30 years helping people solve their life problems as a psycho-therapist.

Today, I left home and work and my life to come here to talk to you about something that may seem very far away, but I see as an important concern for Kansans.

We are asking you to support legislation that will include Kansas in standing up to this hate based economic initiative. The Boycott, Divest, and Sanction Movement

What it is:

### **BDS**

In 2001, the movement clothed itself in a veneer of moral credibility by adopting the language of human rights to falsely brand Israel as a “racist, apartheid state,” as declared by participants in the Non-Government Organization Forum of the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban. Instead of discussing racism, the conference spent its session bashing Israel. The US walked out on the meeting.

#### *The Palestinian Call to Boycott Israel*

In 2005, the BDS movement was energized and expanded by a declaration of a coalition of Palestinian organizations. Their call accused Israel of an “entrenched system of racial discrimination”, and “persistent violations of international law” and called upon “people of conscience” to implement a broad boycott and divestment campaign.

This movement became a cry on university campuses in Europe and by Academic societies that sought to handicap the State of Israel by painting a false picture of discrimination.

Israel is a democracy. All citizens have voting rights.

Without a stance against BDS, the hearts and minds are lost for the next generation, along with the economic impact.

### **What does this legislation do?**

Businesses that contract with the State of Kansas must certify that they do not engage in discrimination against Israel. Each business must include a letter saying that they do not boycott Israel.

Why should we care about this in Kansas? Israel is pretty far away. However, Kansas does about \$83 million dollars in bilateral trade with Israel, an international leader in health sciences, sustainable agricultural water technology and other technologies. Israeli businesses employ hundreds of Kansans. Collaboration with Israeli companies advances the technology of many Kansas based companies. All these things improve the lives of Kansans.

**19 other states have approved versions of anti BDS legislation, including: AZ, CA, NY, FL, IL, NJ, PA, MI, RI, CO, OH, IO,IN,AL,AR,GE,SC, MN and TX**

Others considering this legislation this year are: WI, MA, MD, DE, Maine, North Carolina, AK, Montana, and South Dakota.

Some people have expressed concerns about first amendment issues. This bill does not impede any first amendment rights. Businesses and owners may criticize Israel and speak out in support of the movement.

Anti BDS legislation has enjoyed great bipartisan support across the United States. This is a great opportunity for Kansas unity and support of our great ally, Israel.

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## What is BDS?

- Currently, there is a campaign by non-governmental organizations known as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS), which promotes activities intended to inflict financial harm on, or otherwise limit commercial relations with Israeli and Kansas-based entities. Efforts to inflict economic harm upon Kansas' trading partners weakens Kansas' ability to conduct business and harms the vital economic and employment interests of the state.
- More specifically, the BDS campaign is employed to discriminate against Israelis, Jews, their trade partners and supporters. BDS constitutes commercial discrimination against Israel on the basis of national origin.
- This campaign is being waged against the world's one and only Jewish country - attacking virtually every aspect of its historic, legal, political, economic and cultural life - with the aim of undermining the sovereignty, security and legitimacy of Israel's very existence.
- While no country is perfect, the constant condemnation and criticism Israel endures among the community of nations, and global governing bodies like the UN, is unique. Israel remains a thriving democracy with free and open elections, a free press, and freedom of religion. Israel is also the United States' closest ally in the Middle East.
- Protecting Kansas' trade relationship with Israel by supporting HB 2409 is imperative to the ensuring the economic success of the state. It is not only our trade that is important to protect, as we have multiple companies from Israel that have decided to make Kansas their home. The companies range in fields but here are a couple of our biggest success stories:
  - **TEVA Pharmaceuticals-** Opened a \$46 Million 156,000, Square foot headquarters in Overland Park in 2013. They're world leaders in the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals and innovators in Bioscience.
  - **ICL Performance Products-** Located in Lawrence, ICL specializes in phosphate-based engineering and production. ICL Performance Products makes products that increase global food and water supplies and improves industrial materials and processes

**Please support HB 2409:**

***Prohibiting state contracts with companies that are engaged in an anti-Israeli boycott.***