

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 13, 2017

President A.J. Pruitt
Student Government Association
University of Maryland College Park
College Park, MD 20742

Dear President Pruitt:

The University of Maryland, College Park, is a great university with a great tradition of social and political activism in the student body that we celebrate. We also cherish the campus culture of free speech, mutual tolerance and civic respect that makes this activism possible.

It is in this spirit of open debate and discussion that we write to you about the “Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions” (BDS) Resolution (submitted as Resolution F-17-11-08-B), which many of our constituents, including University of Maryland students, have reached out to us about with concern in recent days.

We believe that passing this Resolution (and others like it in other parts of the country) would be profoundly counterproductive to the goal of advancing real peace, mutual security, human rights, and the two-state solution in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

At a time when large parts of the world are engulfed in violence, conflict and hatred, what we need in the Middle East is a revival of diplomacy, sustained international dialogue and comprehensive peace-making. What we do not need are more efforts to drive a wedge between Israelis and Palestinians, to deepen the dynamics of polarization in the region and to isolate Israeli and Palestinian communities from the rest of the world.


No government is perfect and no government is beyond criticism, but BDS singles Israel out for economic boycott and quarantine in a selective way almost certain to deepen animosity both at home and abroad. Even taken as a simple statement of moral condemnation rather than as a serious effort to advance peace, the Resolution is seriously imbalanced and one-sided: there are human rights violations taking place in any number of countries today, including many where U.S. corporations are operating and the governments are receiving American aid. But Israel alone is targeted here for criticism and ostracism.

We have a responsibility to improve the human rights situation wherever we can in the world, to help resolve differences in regional conflicts, and to engender a lasting peace among peoples. But this imperative is far more complex and challenging than simply targeting one nation in a complex historical conflict—in this case, the Middle East’s only representative democracy—and heaping scorn on it from abroad. There is lively debate within Israel about the issues raised by this Resolution—indeed, it speaks volumes that some of the most vocal critics of Israel’s West Bank policies are Israelis themselves, including students and university faculty with whom the University of Maryland maintains relationships.

People who have been working for years to effect a two-state solution through negotiated settlement—and we are among them—understand that the only way to solve this conflict is by bringing Israelis and Palestinians together for sustained dialogue and problem-solving, not by campaigns of political demonization and economic isolation.

We urge you not to endorse BDS and its counterproductive campaign that would only undermine efforts to achieve enduring Middle East peace through a two-state solution. Thank you for your thoughtful attention and leadership.

Sincerely,



STENY H. HOYER
Member of Congress



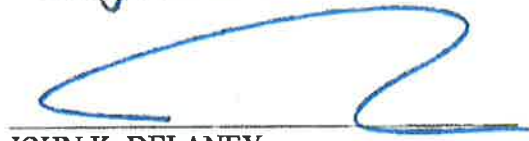
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
U.S. Senator



JAMIE RASKIN
Member of Congress



C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER
Member of Congress



JOHN K. DELANEY
Member of Congress



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