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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 177

House Amendments in [] — February 2, 2016

Expressing the sense of the General Assembly in condemning the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement and its activities in Virginia as its agenda is inherently antithetical and deeply damaging to the cause of peace, justice, equality, democracy, and human rights for all peoples in the Middle East.

Patron Prior to Engrossment—Delegate Miyares

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the State of Israel and the United States are allies sharing a common bond rooted in the values of freedom, democracy, and equal rights; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of Israel have a long history of friendship based on economic, cultural, intellectual, and political cooperation and exchange; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, the Commonwealth reaffirmed its support of the State of Israel with the passage of [the Virginia House] Joint Resolution [No. 659] Encouraging Support for Israel, further strengthening the historic ties between our Commonwealth and that country; and

WHEREAS, the elected representatives of Virginia recognize and support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state; and

WHEREAS, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement is one of the main vehicles advocating for policies leading to the dissolution of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and has sought to hijack social, political, religious, academic, cultural, and economic platforms to discriminatorily isolate Israel within the international community; and

WHEREAS, BDS activists promote a biased and divisive approach to the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict and present this dispute as the fault of only one party—Israel—and advocate unconstructive and divisive actions directed at blaming and pressuring Israel; and

WHEREAS, anti-Israel activities have increased in communities nationwide, including in the Commonwealth of Virginia, on university campuses, in academic and professional associations, in church movements, in the cultural sector, and in other areas; and

WHEREAS, calls for academic boycotts against Israeli academic institutions have been condemned by many of our nation's largest academic associations, more than 250 university presidents, and many other leading scholars as a violation of the bedrock principle of academic freedom; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's elected representatives recognize that punitive economic measures targeting Israel do not contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of economic cooperation and political reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, which is a necessary foundation for a lasting peace in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's elected representatives affirm that both Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live in their own safe and secure states, free from fear and violence, with mutual recognition, trade, and normalization; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly condemn the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement and its activities in Virginia as its agenda is inherently antithetical and deeply damaging to the causes of peace, justice, equality, democracy, and human rights for all peoples in the Middle East; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the members of the General Assembly consider the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement as seeking to undermine efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution and the right of Israelis and Palestinians to self-determination; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Commonwealth of Virginia recognize the importance of trade and commercial relations to the pursuit and sustainability of peace and support efforts to bring together the United States, the State of Israel, and the Palestinian Authority in an enhanced commercial relationship for the betterment of the region; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the members of the General Assembly reaffirm their support for the State of Israel and oppose all attempts to economically and politically isolate Israel within the international arena, including promotion of economic, cultural, and academic boycotts, and all efforts to assault the legitimacy of the State of Israel as the sovereign homeland of the Jewish people.

ENGROSSED

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