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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 177
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
 (Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
 on March 4, 2016)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Miyares)

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.

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, the Commonwealth of Virginia has long worked with and recognized Israel's right to exist and continued friendship with the United States; 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; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes the 68th anniversary of the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel by David Ben Gurion on May 14, 1948, the day that the British Mandate expired, which was recognized that same night by the United States; 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 FURTHER, 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; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to Ralph Robbins, executive director of the Virginia-Israel Advisory Board, Stephen M. Greenberg, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and Richard V. Sandler, chairman of the Jewish Federations of North America Board of Trustees, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.