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Anti-BDS bill advances in Illinois House

With strong bi-partisan support, Illinois moved closer this week to becoming the first state to pass legislation countering the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

SB 1761, which was voted unanimously out of the House Executive Committee on May 13, is expected to be voted on by the end of next week. Governor Bruce Rauner has already stated he will sign the bill.

"In the face of growing number of public displays of anti-Semitism in Europe often taking the form of anti-Israel protests, I wanted to sponsor a bill with consequences for foreign companies that publicly declare an economic boycott of Israel," said State Senator Ira Silverstein, the bill's chief sponsor in the Senate. "Working closely with Richard Goldberg, deputy chief of legislative affairs for Governor Rauner, and Representative Sara Feigenholtz, and with the support of Speaker Madigan who was a co-chief sponsor, we did just that with SB 1761."

Modeled on earlier state legislation that divested from Darfur and Iran, [SB 1761](#) requires the state's five pension funds to divest from foreign companies that boycott Israel. Federal law already prohibits American companies from boycotting Israel. An Illinois Investment Policy Board will ensure compliance with the state's three operative divestment laws (Darfur, Iran and Israel).

"This legislation is a way to counter efforts to economically isolate Israel," said State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, chief sponsor in the House. In response to critics who are concerned about increased costs to the state, Feigenholtz explained, "the creation of the Illinois Investment Policy Board will actually reduce the costs by creating one consolidated list, making it less costly for the State to monitor for compliance. I am proud to advance this legislation."

"People ask how they can fight BDS in a meaningful way," said David Golder, Chair of the JUF Government Affairs Committee. "Our community was eager to be heard and they responded quickly to [our action alerts](#) . If you have not already done so, we urge you to call your legislators."

"At the core of the BDS movement is a quest to delegitimize Israel as a Jewish state," said JUF President Steven B. Nasatir. "So we were thrilled to work with the Governor, leaders from both

parties in the General Assembly, and people from throughout the state to advance the bill. We hope it quickly becomes a template for similar action in many other states."