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March 4, 2014

The Honorable Norman H. Conway  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
6 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 998

Dear Chairman Conway,

We write to urge you to oppose House Bill 998, a bill that would block certain state funds from public colleges and universities directly or indirectly supporting academic boycotts of other countries. While we believe the bill is well-intentioned, and we share the view that such boycotts are misguided, we do not think legislation is the appropriate response. We believe that this bill poses serious constitutional problems and interferes with academic freedom.

Since our founding, the Anti-Defamation League ("ADL") has steadfastly defended freedom of expression for all— whether in the majority or minority. As a strong advocate for free speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and academic freedom, we oppose censoring or stifling opinions and support the free exchange of ideas, even when we disagree with the ideas being exchanged. We believe that free speech is essential to our democracy, particularly our colleges and universities, as it protects our citizenry from censorship, fosters debate, and promotes a diverse marketplace of ideas within our society. If enacted, House Bill 998 would suppress academic freedom and chill speech and dissent protected by the First Amendment.

There should be no doubt that ADL strongly and vocally opposes the practice of universities and academic associations boycotting Israel. We have lauded the educational leaders who condemned the boycott resolution that the American Studies Association adopted in December as an assault on academic freedom. However, while welcoming efforts to challenge and condemn boycott efforts at colleges and universities, we believe encouraging institutions' own leaders to speak out is the more appropriate and constitutionally sound response to these resolutions. Some legislative bodies are also considering resolutions condemning colleges and universities that

Letter to Chairman Norman Conway

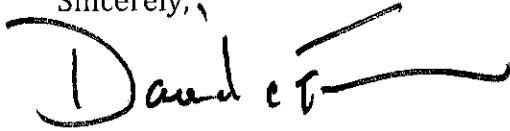
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directly or indirectly support academic boycotts of other countries.

We welcome your public condemnation of efforts to boycott and demonize the State of Israel. Such statements from our elected officials are meaningful and important. But HB 998 is not the answer

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David C. Friedman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

David C. Friedman  
Washington DC Regional Director

cc: Speaker of House of Delegates Michael E. Busch  
Delegate Benjamin F. Kramer