

Jacob Pellegrino
Kansas State Hearing Anti-BDS

Hello, my name is Jacob Pellegrino and I am currently attending the University of Kansas where I am a Senior, full-time student, pro-Israel activist and leader within the pro-Israel movement on my campus. My relationship with Israel is nuanced, challenging, and most of all ever-growing.

It has never been my intention to push upon my community the same belief and passion for Israel that I have, although this is often the case. Instead, I do commit myself to educating my peers and empowering them to form their own opinions. I only believe this to be possible however, when tough conversations are being had absent biases and representative of clear and open dialogue. The BDS movement represents just the opposite. This acronym stands for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against the state of Israel. It is biased, it is misleading, and it is an inhibitor to creating a dialogue that fairly and accurately articulates the complex narratives of this two-sided issue. Everybody should have the right to love and challenge Israel, this should be a choice, and opinions allowed to be formed, this can't happen at the hands of a BDS movement.

Since arriving on campus, I have seen the role and influence of Israel grow and leave its impact on students regardless of political views, religious beliefs, or any other chosen identifier. The University of Kansas, is a flagship institution of this state, it is not only a home for Israeli and Jewish students, but it is also the foundation upon which high levels of education and cultural understanding are built. The university maintains a series of study abroad programs ranging from innovative tech start-ups to archeological digs, a multitude of Jewish based organizations, multiple pro-Israel outlets, and a continually developing and campus-wide event that has come to be known as Israel week. Furthermore, I have seen students from all corners of

campus, many of them leaders within their respective affiliations, travel to Israel, sometimes on multiple occasions, with the intention of increasing their understanding and often eager to return for more. The role Israel plays in our everyday lives is significant and intentional.

College can be a confusing place especially within the realm of politics, but I think that our ability to stand as a cohesive, bi-partisan collegiate generation, a proud by-product of this particular state, and say that we not only support Israel but that we do so as a result of genuine understanding is powerful in itself. We as Americans and citizens of the state of Kansas should continue to support Israel through this piece of legislation reaffirming the fundamentals of the U.S.-Israel relationship and how it plays a role in our communities here at home. I represent a generation of Kansans who are future leaders, teachers, politicians, community organizers and all-around members of our communities. We as students believe in power of a strong education, and ensuring clarity in dialogue is the responsibility of every stakeholder in our community. As such, Our campuses are no place for a BDS movement and neither is our state. Thank you.