

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 junior, full-time student, pro-Israel activist and leader within the pro-Israel movement on my campus. My relationship with Israel and the roots of my dedication to a pro-Israel culture in my communities is quite spectacular. I grew up in a household ran by my parents that was culturally diverse to say the least, my mom coming from a strong Jewish household and my dad being raised a staunch catholic who took it upon himself to convert to Judaism much later in his life. Yet my strong support and involvement in the state of Israel does not stem from my religious background or my parents likening of our own journey to the journey of the Israelites who wandered the desert for 40 years before finding safe haven in the land of Israel. Rather it comes from my own values, likened to and represented in Israel not only domestically and globally but also here at home in the state of Kansas.

In my time on campus, although not always outwardly labeled as so, I have seen the role and influence of Israel grow and leave it's impact on students regardless of political views, religious beliefs, or any other chosen identifier. As it stands The University of Kansas, a flagship institution of this state, is not only a home for Israeli students, but also a bridge to education and growth. 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. The role Israel plays in our everyday lives is significant and intentional. In fact I know that a variety of campus leaders ranging from members of College Republicans to our Student government, namely our current student body president and two viable candidates to assume his position have been to pro-Israel based leadership sessions if not Israel itself because I have overseen, made realistic, and encouraged such participation. Realizing the scope of Kansas extends much farther than the boundaries of Lawrence, I would also note that I have also had the opportunity to engage in a bi-partisan fashion with our allies across the state including the campuses of Kansas State and Wichita State and their leaders of similar stature.

College can be a very confusing place especially within the realm of political views but I think that our ability to stand as a cohesive collegiate generation, one that is a proud by-product of this particular state, and say that we not only support Israel but that we are beneficiaries of the the U.S.-Israeli relationship is more powerful than the words themselves. We as Americans and citizens of the great state of Kansas should continue to support Israel by enacting Anti-BDS 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 in their own ways and on their respective campuses work to support and consistently integrate a little bit of Israel into their lives whether they chose to glorify outwardly or praise unknowingly. These aren't only students activist they are future leaders, they are teachers, politicians, community organizers and members of our communities. We as a students stand together each and every day and outwardly support Israel on our campuses being met with undeniable support along the way. Our campuses are no place for a BDS movement and neither is our state. We are Americans, pro-Israel activist, students, and much more, and I can confidently say that each of those labels is strongly supported when I proudly affirm that I myself am a Kansan. Thank you.