



Growing up, I studied the Civil Rights Movement and learned the struggles my parents' and grandparents' generations faced. One of the most important lessons I internalized was how vital allyship is, among those striving to root out racism, intolerance, and injustice. The allyship between Jewish and Black communities is rooted in shared histories of persecution, exclusion, and violence. In the 1960s, that allyship led many Jewish American attorneys—over half of the NAACP legal defense fund at the time—to risk their lives standing in solidarity with Civil Rights leaders.

Inspired by this kinship, I led a student group at the University of Maryland, called Community Roots. Founded by Jewish and Black students, the group's goal was to end self-segregation on campus. We became a force for change, inviting Latinos, Muslims, and other groups to seek fellowship with one another and see the power of working in unison.

While in college during the Great Recession, I got involved in politics to stop a tuition hike that would have priced out me and many other students. After organizing over 600 students to march on the University President's office and convincing the President to work with us in freezing the tuition rate, I realized the power of collective action. The core of our movement was Black and Jewish students standing together. That protest launched my career as a community and labor organizer and led me to serve as a Senior Advisor to my mentor U.S. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, where I worked to pass criminal justice reform, expand quality and affordable housing, and make economic opportunities more accessible to all. Throughout that work, I have always remembered who stood by me and my family, and I have cherished the support of so many Jewish American allies.

My first AIEF sponsored trip to Israel, as a Maryland Delegate in 2018, was very meaningful to me. Even though I had already built deep, personal ties to the Jewish community, it wasn't until setting foot in Israel that I fully understood why Black-Jewish allyship is so critical. Much like the 'Beloved Community' for which American Civil Rights leaders called us to strive—an idea of a country where all can aspire to live in freedom, justice, and equal opportunity regardless of color or creed—Israel represents the centuries-long yearning of the Jewish people to live in freedom and security, and have a chance to pursue their dreams free from oppression. I witnessed Israelis struggling with the same challenges that Americans do to forge a stronger democracy and

protect the rights and freedoms of all its citizens. To quote Majority Leader Hoyer, who has endorsed my candidacy,

[Israel] is a land of complexity, a special place like America whose diversity is reflected in its vibrant democracy. Whose politics, as we have seen, are far from monolithic, where disagreements expressed through civil discourse make the country stronger. An ally whose American supporters are liberals, conservatives, and moderates united by their faith, passion, commitment, and memory.

After landing in Ben Gurion Airport and driving the hour to Jerusalem, a drive equivalent to the short distance from Baltimore to Washington, D.C., I realized just how small Israel is, and the security implications of that. Each morning, as I jogged through Jerusalem's Old City or through the modern streets of Tel Aviv, I talked with shopkeepers and passers-by about what America and the U.S.-Israel relationship means to them. The answer was the same: people believed that the United States was not only an ally during times of need, but a true partner in making the world more just and safe for all. Likewise, I believe that Israel is America's best friend and strongest ally in the Middle East, a stabilizing force and liberal democracy in a region where too many lack justice and opportunity. My visit to Israel helped me gain an even greater understanding of the need for a secure Jewish Democratic state.

When I returned home, I redoubled my commitment to allyship and fighting antisemitism. After the deadly antisemitic shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, as well as the hanging of nooses in Maryland, I helped pass enhanced criminal penalties against those who would place nooses, swastikas, and other symbols of hate in our communities. These symbols have no place in Maryland or *anywhere* in our country. At a time when antisemitic attacks are rising at dangerous rates, it is essential that those who stand against racism and hatred specifically call out antisemitism and never ignore it.

Many have questioned whether the bonds between the Jewish and African-American communities remain strong. In much of our country, our two communities no longer interact as they did when my parents were young, living in the same neighborhoods or attending the same schools. Moreover, those who stand against the vision of justice that brought so many Jewish and Black leaders and activists together in years past have been working to drive a wedge between historic friends. Divisive tactics such as the discriminatory Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and the spreading of misinformation and hate speech online have further estranged our communities. We must remember that allyship is *active*, not just a status; we make it real by coming to each other's aid on issues big and small. Whether standing up for Israel when it is under attack or marching together to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, our struggle is shared.

As a Member of Congress, I will support resolutions against BDS while upholding Americans' Constitutional right to free speech. I will work to be the bridge among progressives, and to build

deeper solidarity with our Jewish brothers and sisters in the U.S., in Israel, and around the world. To that end, I will continue to stand, unequivocally, as a strong supporter and friend of the State of Israel and work to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Below, I invite you to read more about the specific policies relating to Israel and the Jewish community that I will support in Congress:

### **Supporting and Strengthening the U.S.-Israel Relationship**

After millennia of surviving some of history's most vile persecutions—including mob and state-sponsored violence, forced segregation in the lands where they lived, expulsion from their homeland and their homes, and the genocide of the Holocaust—the Jewish people drew on their enduring perseverance to re-establish sovereignty in the land of their ancestors. The modern state of Israel has every right to defend itself and protect its citizens. As our ally and a symbol of the triumph of democracy, an invaluable source of intelligence and know-how, a strong and protected Israel reinforces the security of the American people, as we remain democracy's greatest champions in the world.

The United States and Israel have an enduring relationship, and as a Member of Congress, I will work to protect and strengthen those bonds. Central to that is advancing the security, economic, and intelligence cooperation between our two nations. I will work to ensure that there is never any daylight between the United States and Israel's efforts to eradicate global terrorism.

### **Preventing the Politicization of Support for Israel**

As a proud young black progressive, I stand committed to justice and equity for all people. For those reasons, I stand with Israel. Over the last several years, some in Washington have sought to turn support for Israel into yet another partisan football. This is to the detriment of not only Israel's safety but America's as well. It undermines our national security and threatens our adherence to the values we champion. These individuals fail to acknowledge that Israel is a democracy governed by the rule of law, where any citizen can speak up, question their leaders, vote as they wish, protest, worship freely, and seek justice in impartial courts. *Only in* a thriving democracy could such things exist without political or violent repercussions.

My Democratic Party, the party that supports democratic principles and freedoms, is a pro-Israel party. I am committed to calling out and holding accountable those who would try to weaken and break the deep bonds of faith and friendship between the United States and Israel. Efforts to delegitimize Israel, or to condition aid to Israel on certain behavioral changes, are inconsistent with our values as Democrats, and our principles and interests as Americans.

### **Building on the Abraham Accords**

Efforts to normalize relations between Israel and its neighbors make the Middle East more secure, and ultimately also help encourage peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The Abraham

Accords show the world that peace is not only possible but that cooperation with Israel is far better and yields far more benefits to Arab nations than conflict and boycott.

As a Member of Congress, I will work toward furthering an environment where more countries want to normalize relations with Israel. I hope that the Arab world will realize that there is more to gain by welcoming Israel as their neighbor and friend than by vilifying it and assisting those bent on violence toward its people.

### **Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's Capital**

Jerusalem is Israel's capital, as it was in ancient times and has been throughout history, and I oppose efforts to move the U.S. Embassy back to Tel Aviv. At the same time, Jerusalem must remain a place where people of all faiths and backgrounds can worship and visit the sites important to them—a principle that Israel has always protected since the city came fully under its control. Jerusalem should remain the undivided capital of the State of Israel, and any major questions about the status of the city must be addressed through bilateral talks between Israelis and Palestinians themselves.

### **Protecting U.S. Aid to Israel & Addressing Humanitarian Needs**

I will never support conditioning aid to Israel. I will defend the longstanding Democratic position that America's unconditional investment in Israel both reflects America's commitment to Israel's security as well as recognizes the enormous return we receive from that investment, in the form of our own security. America is safer when Israel is safe. The ten-year Memorandum of Understanding reached in 2016 by President Obama and Israeli leaders set the standard for how America's commitment to Israel can benefit both nations in the years ahead. I will work to ensure that the United States continues to meet its annual security commitment so that Israel remains resilient. In the face of continued threats, Israel must be able to defend itself and maintain its qualitative military edge.

I also believe that U.S. foreign assistance is necessary to address legitimate humanitarian needs among Palestinians, to prevent violence, and to support stability in the region. However, we must continue to ensure that U.S. dollars never reach the hands of terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah, which are proxy actors of Iran and threaten innocent civilians with violence, and that any aid follows the letter and spirit of the Taylor Force Act.

### **Advancing a Two-State Solution**

I will be a vocal proponent of peace and a negotiated two-state solution. I will work with President Biden and other U.S. leaders to foster the conditions necessary to restart negotiations. I will oppose unilateral actions taken by either Israel or the Palestinians that would inhibit peace in the future. That includes standing up to Palestinian leaders who continue to embrace terrorism and antisemitism, reject direct negotiations with Israel, employ the rhetoric of violence, and put both Palestinian and Israeli lives at risk.

I believe in Israel's right to defend itself. I have stood in the border towns and seen the devastation caused by Hamas rockets. Terrorist attacks launched from Gaza by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad have forced Israel to defend itself, endangering the lives of Palestinian civilians living in Gaza. Fortunately, the Iron Dome defense system has protected Israel's population well and saved thousands of innocent civilians from terrorist rockets. In the spring of 2021, the Iron Dome system used much of its arsenal to deflect and destroy more than 4,000 rockets launched against Israeli communities.

I fully support the immediate replenishment of Iron Dome interceptors to prevent Hamas and Hezbollah rockets from reaching the Israeli schools, houses of worship, hospitals, and homes they target.

### **Containing Iranian Aggression & Preventing a Nuclear-Capable Iran**

Iran is the leading state sponsor of terrorism. It violates the human rights of its people, denies history and the Holocaust, vows genocide against Israel, destabilizes Syria and Lebanon, and has attacked U.S. troops in the region. The United States can never allow Iran to obtain a nuclear-weapons capability. To that end, I disagreed with President Trump's decision to abandon the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that blocked Iran's pathway to a nuclear weapon. However, the original JCPOA negotiated in 2015 could have been stronger, which is why there needs to be a "longer and stronger" agreement negotiated that ensures Iran will never be able to develop or obtain nuclear weapons.

In Congress, I will push back against Iran's destabilizing activities, including its support for terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah and its efforts to develop a ballistic missile program in direct violation of UN Security Council resolutions. Importantly, I will do everything in my power to ensure that Iran is never able to achieve nuclear-weapons capability.

### **Conclusion**

We need more progressives working to strengthen the ties between the United States and Israel and fighting to end hatred and intolerance. I have seen throughout my life, in my service as a State Delegate, and during my work for Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, just how important this work is. I look forward to continuing to build on the efforts I've already undertaken in Prince George's County and in Annapolis as the next Congressman from Maryland's Fourth District.