

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 12, 2024

President Biden,

We write to you today urging you to keep in place country of origin marking requirements as it relates to Israel and maintain a strong economic relationship with our closest ally in the Middle East. Reversing current country of origin labeling standards as they relate to Israel invites confusion about the origin of relevant goods and serves to empower the antisemitic Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

The United States and Israel have long maintained a strong economic and security relationship. Significantly, the first U.S. free trade agreement was the United States-Israel Free Trade Agreement which entered into force in 1985, and today the United States is Israel's single largest trading partner. Throughout the years, the strength of this economic relationship has been a key bulwark against efforts by the BDS movement, which seeks to economically damage Israel by targeting Israeli companies and goods.

Unfortunately, it appears that your administration is now seeking to damage that bulwark by giving in to the demands of the BDS movement. In particular, we are concerned with recent reporting by the *Financial Times* that your administration is considering reversing a Trump Administration decision that required goods produced in certain areas of Judea and Samaria, also known as the "West Bank", specifically Area C under the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement (the Oslo Accords), to be labeled as "Made in Israel".¹

It is common sense to label products from those areas as "Made in Israel". First, Israel exercises "relevant authorities" in these areas of the West Bank.² Products originating in those areas are obviously products of Israel. On the other hand, goods produced where Israel does not exercise those relevant authorities, such as other parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, are not products of Israel and labeling should reflect that. Second, to revert to the pre-2020 labeling practices creates a unique opportunity for BDS discrimination. This is because the United States considers Israeli goods produced in the portions of the Judea and Samaria where Israel exercises relevant authorities as "articles of Israel" for trade purposes. Requiring these goods to be further differentiated as "products of the West Bank" would give key information to BDS activists seeking to target Israeli economic activity.

That threat of BDS targeting is hardly theoretical. Today there are politicians and activists working to oppose Israel and advance the anti-semitic BDS movement. This movement and its allies have one goal: economically damage and isolate the only Jewish state on the planet. These individuals seek to vilify and delegitimize the State of Israel. We stand firmly against these abhorrent views.

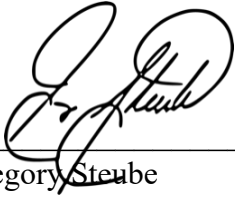
¹ Felicia Schwartz, "US plans to label goods from Jewish settlements in occupied West Bank," *Financial Times*, April 5, 2024.

² U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security. "Country of Origin Marking of Products from the West Bank and Gaza." Federal Register 85 (December 23, 2020): 83984
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/12/23/2020-28547/country-of-origin-marking-of-products-from-the-west-bank-and-gaza>

The October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas and its aftermath underscores the need for both maintaining and expanding our economic relationship with Israel. A reversal of policy regarding labeling from the West Bank is not only an insult to our ally, but also a denial of reality.

We urge you to stand with Israel and not undermine our important trading relationship in ways which empower Israel's adversaries. We must stand with Israel in its fight against Hamas. That includes maintaining a healthy and robust trade relationship. Any policy to the contrary both undermines the security of the United States and Israel, and legitimizes anti-semitic efforts to weaken, isolate, and delegitimize our closest ally in the Middle East.

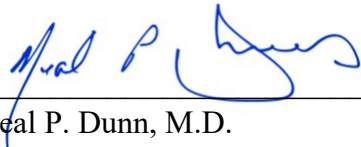
Sincerely,



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Andy Ogles
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



Chuck Fleischmann
Member of Congress