

JCRC engages the Jewish community in public life and builds solidarity across the broader community to meet the critical challenges of our times.

March 8, 2022

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Dear Senate President Spilka, Speaker Mariano, Chair Rodrigues, and Chair Michlewitz,

On behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council and the Mass. Association of Jewish Federations, we write to ask that the House and Senate take up and pass proposed legislation requiring the Massachusetts Pension Reserve Management Fund (PRIM) to identify and divest from companies doing business with Russia. We are grateful to Treasurer Goldberg for her support of divestment from Russia and legislation that would enable her and PRIM to take this important action.

We are horrified by Russia's unprovoked attack on the independent country of Ukraine and her innocent people. We continue to watch as men, women, and children are slaughtered, many as they seek refuge from the violence.

The organized Jewish community is particularly pained by the brutal scenes we are watching. As you know, this is the first land-based war in Europe since WWII. These battlefields are a geography where many of us in the Jewish community have roots as well as a painful reminder of atrocities that destroyed those roots. We understand all too well the consequences of inaction in the face of brutality and violence.

But this act of war and the corresponding toll on civilians is of particular concern to the Jewish community here in Massachusetts. Since 1990, the Boston Jewish community has had a deep and lasting partnership with the Jewish community of Dnipro, Ukraine, home to over 40,000 members of the Jewish community. For more than 30 years, we have had ongoing dialogue, visits, exchanges, joint humanitarian projects and deep people to people connections. In short, Dnipro and indeed all of Ukraine have become part of our own Jewish community here in the Commonwealth.

It is our understanding that PRIM estimates that there is roughly \$140 million in investments with “exposure to Russia.” While only a fraction of our \$140 billion pension fund, any money invested in Russia or companies doing business with the Russian state is tacit approval of the reprehensible actions taken by Russian President Vladimir Putin and those who prop up his regime. As many of your colleagues in the legislature wrote in support of divesting from the pension fund, “It is time for Massachusetts to take similar action by refusing to financially support and profit off those companies whose values run contrary to our own.”

We ask that you take swift legislative action to divest the Massachusetts pension funds from any businesses associated with the Russian state and we stand ready to support you in that effort in any way that we can.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Burton, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston