

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 18, 2017

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu  
3 Kaplan St. Hakiryia  
Jerusalem  
91950  
Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu:

As United States Senators and as Jews proud of the historic and powerful bond between our two nations, we write to express our deep concern about recent Israeli government decisions that continue to reject the equality of Judaism's non-Orthodox movements. We urge you to continue working toward a mutually acceptable solution for the conversion bill now in the Knesset and to say publically that your government will implement its full agreement with non-Orthodox movements and Women of the Wall on an egalitarian prayer space.

The Jewish community in the United States is vibrant and diverse, with American Jews embracing a range of religious and secular identities while also being committed Zionists. We have long believed this Jewish pluralism is a strength to celebrate.

In this context, we applaud your recent decision to put a hold on a conversion bill under consideration by the Knesset. As we understand it, this bill would invest full oversight of conversions in Israel to the Chief Rabbinate. We fear this would have significant ramifications for the religious equality of all Jewish movements in Israel and we worry that our Modern Orthodox and non-Orthodox constituents will see this as an attack on their Jewishness and the status of their rabbis. We encourage you to continue working toward a mutually acceptable resolution that respects and celebrates the totality and diversity of *klal Yisrael*.

We are also very concerned by the Israeli government's recent decision to freeze a widely-agreed-upon plan to establish an egalitarian prayer space at the Western Wall. The Kotel is a beloved space and a site of immense religious and historical significance. We were therefore gratified to see your government agree in 2016 to establish an egalitarian space, with common access to all prayer areas; to allow the non-Orthodox movements to have governance over that egalitarian area; and to have shared governance of all movements over the upper plaza behind the prayer areas near the wall. We were deeply disappointed to see you suspend that same agreement and now urge you to respond affirmatively to the Supreme Court's request that your government declare its willingness to reinstate the agreement it forged and signed.

We fear actions like the conversion bill and the suspension of the Kotel agreement will strain the unique relationship between our two nations, particularly if the majority of American Jews see the movements to which they are committed denied equal rights in Israel. Given all the challenges Israel faces on the international stage, we urge you not to alienate committed Zionists.

As United States Senators, we believe the U.S.-Israel relationship remains a source of strength to both nations. Our commitment to strengthen this special bond is unshakable, as is our commitment to Israel's security and well-being. As American Jews, we value the deep connection between the diaspora and the State of Israel. It is in this spirit that we send this letter and it is in this spirit that we hope you will receive it.

Sincerely,



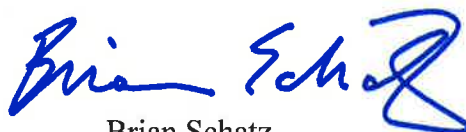
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Al Franken  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator