



Dr. Tom Johnstone
Chair, School Employers Association of California
2172 Dupont Drive, Suite 13,
Irvine, CA 92612

July 19, 2017

Dear Dr. Johnstone,

I would like to thank you for your stance vis-à-vis Assembly Bill 1597 which proposes prohibiting Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) and the State Teachers' Retirement System (STRS) from investing public employee retirement funds in Turkish investment vehicles.

This bill hurts hundreds of thousands of employees and their organizations who invest with CalPERS and CalSTRS as well as more than 75,000 Turkish Americans living in California. This bill clearly prioritizes interests of certain lobby groups over the rights and benefits of domestic workers.

Furthermore, divestment, a tool of foreign policy, is in fact a kind of sanction, and as you know, allies do not impose sanctions on each other. There have been cases in the past where California has passed legislation against other countries such as South Africa, Libya, Sudan and Iran. Equating Turkey with these countries is simply unacceptable and truly unfortunate.

Moreover, the sponsors of this bill want to punish Turkey based on a historically debated incident that happened a century ago. This is an issue that needs to be resolved between Turkey and Armenia, and we should not let certain interest groups hijack our bilateral relations.

Last but not least, more than 1500 American companies operate in Turkey, many of which, including Californian ones, bid for multi-billion projects. This bill undermines all of our efforts in building a closer cooperation and jeopardizes the trade, economic as well as political relations between Turkey and US.

I would like to thank you again for standing against Assembly Bill 1597, and hope that you will maintain this stance in the future.

Sincerely,


R. Gülnur GEZER
Consul General