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CHARLES D. LAVINE
Assemblyman 13th District

CHAIR
Election Law Committee

August 15, 2019

His Excellency Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister of Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu:

I write as a Jewish Member of the New York State Assembly to urge reconsideration of the decision barring United States Congressional Representatives Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar from visiting Israel.

It is widely reported that you have made this determination following a request by President Trump. I hope that it may be of significance to you to know that while many Americans, including myself, do not agree with Tlaib and Omar on certain critical issues, democracies must never equate debate with heresy. Having been to Israel, I suspect that the overwhelming majority of Israelis feel the same.

Stifling speech is an affront to the precepts of democracy, whether we like that speech or not. Being able to speak freely is respected in all great nations. Israel has long recognized the freedom to speak as a fundamental human right.

I therefore urge reconsideration of your decision and thank you for your consideration respecting this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Lavine".

Charles Lavine
Member of Assembly