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Lusher Recognized for Legislative Work

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Ben Lusher received the Ruth and Warren Toltz Young Leadership Award at JEWISHColorado's annual meeting in September. The award was in recognition of his leadership in drafting and lobbying on behalf of House Bill 1284 in this year's session of the Colorado General Assembly. Signed by the governor in March, the bill prohibits the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA), Colorado's largest pension fund, from investing in international companies that engage in the economic boycott of Israel.



Ben Lusher

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The award is given annually to recognize a young adult male who has demonstrated extraordinary service and leadership in the Denver Jewish community: "Ben demonstrated exceptional commitment and tenacity in his efforts to ensure that our Colorado community continues to stand with Israel."

Lusher is 32 and recently moved to Stapleton with his wife and two daughters ages 1 and 3. He is director of business development for Nexus BSP, an energy company. He previously worked in the Ritter administration for four years as a senior policy advisor for economic development.

Colorado is the fourth state in the country to pass what is known as anti-BDS legislation. BDS stands for boycott, divestment and sanctions. The "BDS Movement" website says it "works to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law." Lusher says the BDS Movement is "fraught with factual inconsistencies" and is underlain by anti-Semitism.

"If PERA were to invest in companies that have economic prohibitions against Israel, then we as citizens of Colorado would be indirectly supporting sanctions against our strongest ally in the Middle East, and the only one which shares our democratic values," said Lusher, "We applaud the General Assembly for taking this important step to ensure our investments reflect our priorities and our values."

Lusher undertook his work on behalf of HB-1284 in his capacity as chair of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), which advocates for domestic and international policy issues that affect the Colorado Jewish community. The JCRC is a program of JEWISHColorado.

HB-1284 was proposed by two state legislators, one Republican, the other a Democrat, who had toured Israel on an educational trip for public officials organized by JEWISHColorado. The bill passed overwhelmingly with bipartisan support and multiple sponsors.

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