

Good Morning,

My name is Mark Poepelman and I am the Executive Director of the Columbus International Program. We are a non-profit organization with a Mission of “Promoting International Understanding through Intercultural Exchange”. We are one of two J-1 Visa Sponsors in the State of Ohio and along with our parent organizations CIP USA based in Chagrin Falls we have brought over 15,000 professionals from around the world to the Ohio and other portions of the United States for professional training and cultural immersion.

Today, we all live in a very competitive global economy. The desire to sustain and expand the commercial airline and air freight services including international services in Ohio provides an opportunity for long term economic and international growth. The state of Ohio is unique in that while we are embedded in the Midwestern principles, our state is also home to many international businesses and we value what our international community offers. In Columbus alone, we house more than 45,000 Somalis and nearly 20,000 Nepali and Bhutanese who are creating business opportunities every day. In 2014, 253,000 people were employed by affiliates of companies at least 50% foreign-owned, and during 2016, 37,752 international students were enrolled in Ohio colleges and universities, contributing \$1.1 billion to the Ohio economy. Additionally, the state of Ohio is becoming more and more involved with business opportunities with China. I believe House Bill 206 will have a tremendous positive impact on our state economy and raise awareness to the national and international community that Ohio is a state offering plenty of opportunities for business, employment, culture, and travel.

In addition to increasing the accessibility of commercial and business transportation, nationally and abroad, this expansion will also create jobs opportunities for Ohioans and generate more revenue for the state. Furthermore, by including the international services to the expansion, Ohio will contribute to the growth of a more globalized community. More importantly, the international community will recognize that the state of Ohio means business and development

Finally, from my experience, as we are moving more and more towards the services sector, our generation, and the following generations must have a strong sense of global competence to succeed. By providing this expansion we are not only creating the opportunities needed for our current generation to succeed, but we are also investing in the future success of our future Ohioans.

In conclusion, I am advocate for promoting international peace through intercultural exchange and I believe House Bill 206 will not only promote greater opportunities for the international community in Ohio and the United States to engage in citizen diplomacy, but it can also provide a competitive economic advantage for the state of Ohio.