



GENERAL GOVERNMENT
AND AGENCY REVIEW
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date February 11, 2020

Name: Cynthia M. Maleski National President (CEO)

Address: 249500 Chagrin Blvd.

Beachwood, Ohio 44122-5634

Telephone: 216-464-8015

Organization Representing: First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association of the United States of America (FCSLA)

Testifying on Bill Number: S.B. 261

Testimony: Verbal Written Both *

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests: Respectfully request that S.B. 261 be amended to include

Slovak as an identifiable ethnic group. *We may have witness testimony, if availability permits on short notice. ^{verbal}

First **Catholic** Slovak Ladies **Association**



24950 Chagrin Blvd. • Beachwood, Ohio 44122-5634

Phone: (216) 464-8015
Toll Free: (800) 464-4642
Fax: (216) 464-9260
E-Mail: info@fcsla.org
www.fcsla.org

Hon. Kirk Schuring
Chair
General Government and
Agency Review Committee
North Hearing Room
2nd Floor
Ohio Statehouse Capitol
1 Capital Square
Columbus, Ohio 43215

RE: S.B. 261 Creates Commission and Office of Eastern European Affairs

Dear Senator Schuring,

On behalf of the members of the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association of the United States of America, (hereafter "FCSLA"), domiciled in the State of Ohio and based in Beachwood, Ohio, I respectfully request that this committee and appropriate bodies amend S.B. No. 261, sponsored by Senators Yuko and Rulli, to include Slovak as an identifiable ethnic group or regarded as such in the community, specifically Sec. 107.23 (11) (B) (2).

Slovaks came to the United States from the eastern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the great immigration movements in 1890-1918. Today, Slovakia is a landlocked country in eastern Europe bordered by Austria and the Czech Republic in the west, by Hungary in the south, by Poland in the north, and Ukraine in the east. According to immigration records 480,201 Slovaks entered the country between 1899 and 1918, in smaller numbers until the 1920s, and after World War II and after the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union.

Many of these immigrants settled in great manufacturing centers of the United States, including parts of Ohio, especially its Northeast corridor. By 1920, the number of Slovaks had risen to over forty-two thousand in Ohio.

Today, almost half of all Slovak Americans reside in Pennsylvania (233,160) and Ohio (137,343).*

FCSLA is a fraternal benefit society domiciled in the State of Ohio and licensed to do business in 48 states and the District of Columbia. We were founded in 1892 by nine immigrant Slovak women, led by our Foundress, Anna Hurban, in a church hall in Cleveland, Ohio. Our home office has always been based in the Greater Cleveland area. Our purpose is to provide financial security to our members, while embracing our values and cultures.

*Source Wikipedia: Bureau of U.S. Census. "[American Factfinder-Results](https://factfinder2.census.gov/)". Factfinder2.census.gov.
Retrieved 7 October, 2017

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We have over 109,000 members, over 13,000 who live in Ohio. We have 93 branches in Ohio, many of which promote and serve Slovak interests and Slovak-American members who work and gather at our local functions. We help fund and sponsor many Slovak cultural and ethnic events and causes in our communities and neighborhoods, including the Slovak Radio Club, Slovak Dramatic Club, Slovak Christmas Eve suppers ("Vilijas"), and Sister City programs including Bratislava Sister Cities, Youngstown – Spisska Nova Ves, Ashtabula – Bardejov, Kent- Dudince, and other prominent, longstanding Slovak cultural and community events.

FCSLA supports Lucina, a youth Slovak Folk Ensemble active in Cleveland, financially, culturally and with moral support. We are a benefactor of the Slovak Institute, an educational facility in Cleveland dedicated in 1952 whose purpose is to collect, archive, preserve and serve as a research facility for those interested in Slovak culture, history and music. We also have provided major support to the Slovak Heritage Room located at John Carroll University. Along with other Slovak-American fraternal, we have also endowed a major university for the purpose of teaching Slovak language. In Cleveland, a group of dedicated Slovaks work to preserve the Slovak Cultural Garden as part of the Cleveland Cultural Gardens.

We have also supported and served in leadership roles in the Slovak League of America, a cultural and civic organization, promoting and advocating for a free, democratic Slovak Republic since its founding in 1907 by Rev. Father Stefan Furdek in Cleveland, Ohio. Our districts continue our Slovak hymns and religious liturgies as part of our religious heritage.

There are a number of laudable features to this legislation. In conclusion, we respectfully request that the legislation be amended to include Slovak as an identifiable ethnic group.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this comment and for your utmost consideration of this amendment.

Sincerely,

Cynthia M. Maleski
National President (CEO)

CC: Hon. Kenny Yuko
Hon. Michael A. Rulli