



11 February 2020

Subject: Ohio SB 261

I am writing in support of SB 261 to establish a state commission on East European affairs. I represent the John and Helen Timo Foundation, which promotes and supports Carpatho-Rusyn cultural development in North America and the European homeland. Carpatho-Rusyns are an ethnic and linguistic minority living in what is today Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary, and Romania, with notable diaspora groups in Czechia, Serbia, Croatia, and the United States and Canada. For well over 100 years, Ohioans of Carpatho-Rusyn descent have been working in many ways to make Ohio a great state.

Since the Foundation was established in 2012, we have been cooperating with organizations and individuals in Ohio to achieve our mission. This has included events organized with grassroots organizations in Youngstown and Cleveland, producing a concert that took place at the Cleveland Institute of Music, hiring Ohio-based musicians as part of the production of a documentary film, and cooperating with the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association for an event commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

The establishment of a state commission would be an important indicator of the high levels of cooperation that are already happening to connect Ohioans and their neighbors in the pursuit of cultural development, showing the rich diversity of Ohio's citizens, whether they arrived here 100 years ago or more recently. Ohio's leadership on this issue will serve as a model for other states with large groups of eastern European people, and strengthen the strong social and economic ties that already exist in our communities.

With kind regards,

Maria Silvestri
President

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*As Carpatho-Rusyns dedicated to our beloved ancestors and traditions,
we are committed to educating others and promoting our treasured culture and faith.*