



GENERAL GOVERNMENT
AND AGENCY REVIEW
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date February 18, 2020

Name: George N. Juba

Address: 5400 Tuscarawas Road
Beaver, PA 15009

Telephone: 724-495-3400

Organization Representing: GCU

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: None

Written testimony is a public record and may be posted on the Ohio Senate's website



Investing in the Goodness
of Community

George N. Juba

President/CEO

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My name is George Juba and I am the President of the GCU, a national fraternal benefit society headquartered in Beaver, PA. Fraternal benefit societies are not-for-profit membership groups that unite individuals with a common bond, provide them the ability to secure their families' financial security through a variety of life insurance and investment products, and form one of the nation's most effective and efficient volunteer networks, delivering billions of dollars of direct financial aid and community service to those who need it most.

Founded in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on February 14, 1892 starting with a meager \$600.00 in its treasury, the GCU's initial common bond was of an ethnic and religious nature, specifically of the Carpatho-Rusyn ethnicity and of the Byzantine Catholic faith. The largest segment of Rusyn immigrants settled in the anthracite coal regions near Scranton and Wilkes-Barre in Pennsylvania, the bituminous coal fields of Ohio, western Pennsylvania and West Virginia and the steel mill towns near Pittsburgh and Cleveland. These workers faced dangerous and life-threatening conditions every day of their lives, many losing their lives in these mines and mills while others suffered severe injuries and became permanently disabled. Insurance companies at the time would not insure such laborers and miners due to the risky nature of their jobs and their immigration status. Hence, one of the aims of the founding of the GCU was to provide financial aid in the form of life insurance to its members and their heirs in the event of death.

Our founders and initial generations of members had a deep faith in God and cherished their beloved Byzantine Catholic faith. As soon as a meager subsistence was amassed by the settlers and a community formed, churches were established. Churches were built first and successful Carpatho-Rusyns within these settled communities financed the hiring of a priest from their homeland to service these parishes. Today, the Byzantine Catholic Ruthenian (Rusyn) Church has grown into four eparchies serving the Byzantine Catholic faithful throughout the United States. One of those eparchies is headquartered in Parma, Ohio.

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 261 for the creation of an Eastern European Commission and an Office of Eastern European Affairs for the State of Ohio, so that current and future generations of all races and religious backgrounds are educated on the plight of our Carpatho-Rusyn ancestors and other East Europeans and their role in our country's early industrial beginnings along with the contributions of many noted Carpatho-Rusyn and East European Americans over the years that have made the United States of America and the State of Ohio what it is today.

Thank you!

George N. Juba
President/CEO