

Hon. James P. Trakas

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PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF JAMES P. TRAKAS S.B. 261 (Yuko)

MR. Chairman Schuring, Mr. Vice Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien, Leader Yuko and Members of the Committee. Good afternoon, it is my pleasure to testify in favor of S.B. 261 that creates a Commission and Office of Eastern European Affairs for the State of Ohio. By way of background, I have been involved in the Greek American Community for many years, and as a Legislator, together with my then colleague Rep. Johnnie Maier, helped form the Ohio Legislative Ethnic Caucus to help advance the affairs of the proud nationalities that make up the State of Ohio.

I live in Cuyahoga County, and did you know that we speak 113 languages in the Cleveland area? Each one of those languages represents proud Americans who love this country, and also pay tribute to the lands in which we came by creating a distinctly American culture while respecting the traditions and pride of our native lands. For me, my Grandparents came to the USA just about 100 years ago, we sought to learn English and benefit from its unifying structure and the commerce of this country, which was superior to the nation my relatives left at the time. They lived the American Dream, as have millions of others from Eastern Europe who came to Ohio and helped literally build America, make America strong, economically, spiritually, and culturally.

But this Office and Commission is not nostalgic. It is a way to further increase ties with a rich and vibrant section of the World. The office will work to expand trade relations with