



**EASTERN  
EUROPEAN  
CONGRESS**  
*of* **OHIO**

Proponent Testimony  
Commission on Eastern European Affairs  
And  
Office of Eastern European Affairs  
Senate Bill 46

THANK YOU MADAME CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

MY NAME IS LAUREL TOMBAZZI, CHAIR OF THE EASTERN EUROPEAN CONGRESS OF OHIO.

10% OF OHIO'S POPULATION HAS EASTERN EUROPEAN HERITAGE. ONE OUT OF TEN PEOPLE, ONE OUT OF TEN VOTING, ONE OUT OF TEN IN SCHOOLS & BUSINESS IS EASTERN EUROPEAN. THE LARGEST EASTERN EUROPEAN POPULATIONS IN OHIO ARE POLISH, HUNGARIAN AND SLOVAK.

I AM ASKING FOR AN AMENDMENT TO SB 46 SECTION 107.23 B (2) ADD THE WORD SLOVAK.



## TESTIMONY COMMISSION/OFFICE

2

IN 2019, A HISTORIC FIRST FOR THE OHIO BULGARIAN COMMUNITY TOOK PLACE. THE FIRST HONORARY CONSUL FOR THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA WAS NAMED. THERE WAS A CEREMONIAL EVENT THAT TOOK PLACE IN SOUTHERN OHIO. US AND OH SENATORS, OH HOUSE REPS, THE MAYOR OF THE AREA AS WELL AS THE LOCAL CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS WERE INVITED NO ONE SHOWED UP. NO INTEREST, NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY ANY GOVERNMENT LEADERS.

A FEW YEARS AGO, A CERTIFIED OHIO PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER SAID QUOTE WHERE IS UKRAINE? END OF QUOTE DURING THE CONFLICT OF RUSSIA AND UKRAINE. UKRAINE AND RUSSIAN HAD BEEN IN THE WORLD NEWS FOR 18 MONTHS YET THIS SCHOOL TEACHER DID NOT KNOW WHERE UKRAINE WAS.

A COMMISSION WOULD BE ABLE TO INFORM EACH OF YOU BETTER ABOUT THE CONFLICT THAT IS GOING ON BETWEEN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA NOW, GIVING YOU A BETTER EDUCATED PATH TO WORK ON SOLUTIONS TO THIS CURRENT SITUATION.

HOW ABOUT HAVING A LAST NAME LIKE MAHOVLICH OR ZACKOWSKI OR A FIRST NAME LIKE KYRIAKOS OR SVETLANA? NO ONE REALIZES THE TREMENDOUS HUMILIATION AND BULLYING THAT SOMEONE IN OUR SCHOOLS OR IN THE WORKPLACE GOES THROUGH WITH DIFFERENT EASTERN EUROPEAN NAMES.

## TESTIMONY COMMISSION/OFFICE

3

WHERE IS OUR VALUE SHOWN TO US BY OHIOANS AND OHIO LEADERS?

THERE IS A SCENE IN THE MOVIE MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING. THE YOUNG GREEK ACTRESS IS ABOUT AGE 9, THE SCENE IS IN THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA. THE OTHER YOUNG ACTOR ASKS THE GREEK ACTRESS WHAT'S THAT IN YOUR LUNCH? THE GREEK ACTRESS SAYS IT'S MOUSSAKA. THE BOY ACTOR MAKES FUN OF THE NAME OF THIS

EXCELLENT TASTING GREEK DISH. THE ACTOR LAUGHS WHILE THE GREEK ACTRESS IS EMBARRASSED. THE MOVIE GOT IT RIGHT. THIS HAPPENS FREQUENTLY. WOULDN'T YOU AGREE THAT A COMMISSION WOULD HELP ELIMINATE ALL THE ANTI-EASTERN EUROPEAN STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION AND NEGATIVITY THAT WE HAVE ENDURED IN OHIO?

A COMMISSION CAN WORK WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO INCORPORATE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EASTERN EUROPEANS INTO THEIR EXISTING CURRICULUM AND EDUCATE TEACHERS. SO WHEN A STUDENT COMES IN WITH AN ABSENT EXCUSE LETTER ON JANUARY 8 FOR THEIR TEACHER, THE TEACHER WOULD NOT SCOLD THE STUDENT BY SAYING QUOTE YOU ALREADY HAD YOUR CHRISTMAS ON DECEMBER 25 END OF QUOTE

## TESTIMONY COMMISSION/OFFICE

4

THE AMERICAN CROATIAN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION STATES THAT IN CLEVELAND, CROATIAN BUSINESSES EMPLOY ABOUT 2,000 WORKERS WITH A GROSS INCOME OF \$300,000,000. CROATIANS GIVE THEIR ACCOUNTABILITY BACK TO OHIO BUT WHERE IS THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF OUR OHIO LEADERS TO THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES AND THE ASHKENAZI JEWISH COMMUNITY? WE HAVE NO CENTRAL PLACE FOR EASTERN EUROPEANS TO GET HELP IN OHIO.

MANY PEOPLE WITHIN OUR OHIO CONGRESS HAVE TOLD ME THAT SEVERAL COMMISSIONS ARE GOING TO BE ELIMINATED. KNOWING THAT SOME CURRENT COMMISSIONS HAVE NOT MET IN YEARS OR SIT IDLE WITHIN OHIO, THESE ARE THE COMMISSIONS THAT NEED TO BE REMOVED.

WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE EASTERN EUROPEAN AND ASHKENAZI JEWISH COMMUNITIES ARE NOT GOING TO BE PASSED OVER BY ANY OTHER GROUPS THAT WOULD WANT A SIMILAR COMMISSION FOR THEIR PEOPLE. CREATING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ONE GROUP WHILE FAVORING ANOTHER.

WHEN SOMEONE ASKS US...WHY NOT THE WESTERN EUROPEANS? WE ARE NOT TAKING AWAY ANYTHING FROM ANY OTHER GROUP OF PEOPLE. VALUE IS ADDED TO EACH UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE MOSAIC FABRIC THAT WEAVES DIVERSITY AMONG OHIOANS.

# TESTIMONY COMMISSION/OFFICE

5

WE HAVE AN EXCEPTIONAL GIFT TO OFFER OHIO, PLEASE OPEN THIS GIFT BY YOUR SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 46.

THANK YOU. ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?

Submitted by  
Laurel Ann Tombazzi  
Chairperson  
Eastern European Congress of Ohio  
December 7, 2021