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My name is Natalie Eberhard. I'm a licensed social worker, master's level student, and intern at the Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio. I have also been volunteering with a Bhutanese-Nepali organization that strongly supports this resolution. I want to share that I am not Bhutanese-Nepali and had no prior knowledge of the experiences these people have endured before working in this space. Since then, I have had the pleasure to meet, get to know, and work with many Bhutanese-Nepali people. They have been some of the kindest, most generous, and compassionate people that I've met. Which is a reason why I was so shocked and appalled to have learned the history of these people, including the experiences they have been through.

It is disheartening to hear about the inhumane injustices they have lived through and the rights that are still being refused from the Bhutan government, such as seeing their loved ones. Even to this day, decades later, there are people still being unlawfully detained and tortured in Bhutan. They have been tortured for no other reason than being a part of a different culture, which is something I could not imagine going through. It is a powerful experience for people to be able to share their own stories with this committee, but I want to recognize the many adults and children that have lost their lives to the cruel abuse and forced displacement that can't be here to tell their story.

As a licensed social worker, it is my responsibility to advocate for humanitarian rights for those that have been oppressed, regardless of where they come from. It is a part of my ethical and legal obligation to the state and to the people in this state to inform government officials of these injustices, and to advocate for needs in policy.

Now that I am informed about the ethnic cleansing that occurred in Bhutan, I can advocate for Bhutanese-Nepali people and make a difference in their community. This is similar to what we are asking of this committee. We are asking for this committee to make a difference in these people's lives and in their families' lives. We are asking you to show them that the United States government values their culture, contributions to the community, and will continue to work towards justice.

This resolution would positively impact the people standing in front of you and tens of thousands of others that have been forcibly removed from their homes, from their loved ones, and everything they knew, to become a refugee and a citizen in Ohio. Despite it all, they are here, thriving in this community, but what they need is for their government to support them as citizens, and work towards building peace and reconciliation with their home country. They want to be able to see their loved ones again, who were wrongfully taken away from them. Passing this resolution would alleviate mental distress from people that have already endured so much, and it would allow us to build stronger communities with the help of our elected officials. Today, we can come together to acknowledge the pain these people have endured and work on moving forward.