



Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 449.

HB 449 would designate the second Monday of October as "Italian Heritage Day". That day coincides with Columbus Day in honor of Italian explorer Christopher Columbus. Over the years, this day has also been embraced as an opportunity to honor the heritage of all Italian Americans and the many contributions Italian families have made to America!

Some foolishly want to eliminate the day altogether. They forget that Columbus Day is meant to honor the rich history of Italian Americans and to celebrate the indelible mark Italian Americans have made on the business, cultural, culinary, civic and religious life of our nation. As an Italian American myself, I have grown up celebrating the art, food, and culture of my ancestors but also acknowledging the many struggles they faced to gain acceptance in their new homeland. To take away Columbus Day is to take away a day to mark that struggle and to celebrate the shared heritage and accomplishments of my people and the Italian American community. That cannot and should not happen.

We need to ensure that the countless contributions made by hardworking Italian Americans are given their time to shine. We can do that by designating the second Monday of October as "Italian Heritage Day" to be celebrated in conjunction with Columbus Day. Just like our state has always done, we can move Ohio forward into the future while venerating our past.

Mille grazie to Representative Carfagna and Representative Lanese for sponsoring this legislation that will be so meaningful to Ohio's Italian American community. I look forward to seeing this bill move through the legislative process. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank LaRose".

Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State