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PROPONENT TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 261

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 261. Throughout the first two hearings on this Bill, you have received proponent testimony from more than a dozen individuals. As another proponent of the Bill speaking on behalf of myself, I may not offer much that you have not already heard. But I felt compelled to speak briefly today on behalf of Eastern Europeans from the smaller and less represented—but just as important—region of former Yugoslavia.

My name is Saša Trivunić and I am an attorney here in Columbus, Ohio. I was born in former Yugoslavia in a small town that is now in Bosnia & Herzegovina. My family left our hometown after the Yugoslav wars and I eventually found my way here to Columbus. Like the other proponents of this Bill, I have seen the lack of resources devoted to, and the underrepresentation of, Eastern European cultures, traditions, and customs in Ohio. As I raise my own family here, I hope to see that change for them and the creation of The Commission on Eastern European Affairs by Senate Bill 261 is a promising step in that direction.

My family, like those of other Eastern Europeans, is learning about their father and husband's upbringing, his language, why dad talks "weird" to grandpa, why the food at grandma's (or, as they affectionately call her, "baba's") house tastes different, why their cousins dress differently, why there are two Christmases, and why nobody can pronounce their last name. The Commission will help families like mine by raising awareness about the various Eastern European cultures, connect them with other similarly-situated individuals, and provide much-needed resources to those who need them. And it will help Ohioans who are not of Eastern European descent who will, even if tangentially, learn about and connect with their Eastern European friends, neighbors, and fellow Ohioans.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I urge you to support Senate Bill 261. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Saša Trivunić