

Magyar Club of Dayton

President: Eva M. Lazear

eva.lazear@gmail.com

937-207-8748

Thank you, Representative Wilkin, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Senate Bill 46.

My name is Éva Lazear, an Australian-born, Hungarian immigrant, and President of the Magyar (Hungarian) Club of Dayton. As I look back on my own immigrant status as a child, I recall how much I was bullied and derided because I spoke “funny” and used unusual Australian words! I can remember times when I was called a kangaroo and was asked where my pouch was! And I spoke English—albeit with an Australian accent! So, what does this have to do with this bill, you might ask. As a result of my own background, I can imagine the difficulties of being an Eastern European immigrant child who knows no English, whatsoever! My mother, for example, endured a bit of derision as well—although she spoke English—because she maintained her deeply-rooted Hungarian accent and cultural tendencies.

Over the past 9 months, Russian illegal aggression in the Ukraine has prompted calls to action, and the American majority is very much in favor of continuing support for that war-ravaged country. Now is the time to act, the time to make changes, and the time to become solidly supportive in the great state of Ohio. Now is the time to create a Commission that will welcome refugees, as well as businesses and entrepreneurs—a Commission that would be responsive to the needs of those willing to relocate because of the dreadful situation in their home countries. Not only does that include Ukrainians, but also Polish, Hungarian, Moldavians, Croatians, Bulgarians, and even Russians. That is what SB 46 can do—create a venue where these nationalities can feel their needs are being met.

Today there are more than double the amount of Eastern European immigrants than the numbers of those from Western and Southern Europe—combined--in the United States.

However, countries from the West and South of Europe are much better known. Everyone knows the French, the Spanish, the Swedish, the Italians, and the Germans, etc. But how many Americans know of the Belarusians, Carpatho-Rusyns, Croatians, Czechs, Slovaks, and Latvians, for example—let alone where they are located.

To have a Commission in Ohio that caters to such a broad spectrum of nationalities would be advantageous to those needing assistance in housing, employment, language interpretation, education, and business opportunities. Not only would it improve the standard of living for those of Eastern European heritage, but it would also attract new entrepreneurs and business partnerships. This would stimulate economic growth in this great state. We need to do more to attract foreign entities to relocate or build in the State of Ohio. I believe the Commission would be able to do so. According to The HSBC (International Business Guide): “The transitioning economies of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania in particular have attractive long-term growth prospects which make this region an ideal international base.” Some industries, in fact, surpass the United States in development. For example, Central and Eastern Europe has some of the fastest internet speeds in the world. Romania even manages to trump the US when it comes to fast internet. Bucharest was also ranked as Europe’s best city for digital infrastructure in the EDCI (European Digital City Index) of 2016. Budapest, Bratislava, Prague, and Warsaw scored highly, too, above the likes of London, Berlin, and Brussels. Wouldn’t it be exciting if we could entice some of those entrepreneurs to invest in Ohio?

Organizations in the past have sent delegations from Ohio to solicit new business from places like Hungary and Croatia. A Commission to help relocate such businesses would be advantageous for business-minded immigrants, who provide new jobs for Ohioans and their own educated and dedicated personnel. The possibilities are endless. Revenue for Ohio is the name of the game, and the Eastern European market is still wide open.

Current partnerships like those of The National Guard State Partnership (SPP) have linked with Hungary and Serbia for the purpose of improving bilateral relations with the United States. Being the first state to create an Eastern European Commission and an Office of Eastern European Affairs would have the same effect across the state, with an emphasis on economic growth. From small businesses like *The Hungarian Butcher* here in Columbus, *Marina's International Deli* in Cincinnati, *The Balaton* in Cleveland and large corporations like *Proctor & Gamble Eastern Europe LLC*—which generates \$7.99 million by the way— and *Polymer Ohio*, one of the primary companies in Ohio's largest industry clusters, are enticing immigrants and businesses to join, work, create and eat in Eastern European style in the great state of Ohio. For these reasons, I urge you to support SB 46, so that we can educate and economically grow Ohio.