

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

March 2, 2022

**Proponent Testimony SB 46
Regarding Office and Commission on Eastern European Affairs
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, my name is Brian Hickey. I am an Associate Director of the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Conference is the official representative of the Catholic Church of Ohio in matters of public policy. We thank Minority Leader Yuko and Senator Rulli for introducing Senate Bill 46 to create an office and commission on Eastern European Affairs.

The Catholic Church worldwide calls on communities to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate immigrants, especially those fleeing volatile areas of the world. We are grateful for the vibrancy that Eastern Europeans bring to the Catholic Church throughout Ohio and their cultural enrichment in our towns and cities. SB 46 will help promote and integrate our Eastern European brothers and sisters across Ohio and assist their efforts in bringing further success to our state.

We all know of the tremendous courage Ukrainians, some of whom are friends and family members of Ohioans, continue to display to defend their homeland from Russian violent, unjust aggression. With the enormous challenges for Ukrainians ahead, the Catholic Conference of Ohio is proud that our state can serve as a leader in the United States for Eastern Europeans by creating this office and commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.