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H.R. 369 – Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chairman Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and esteemed colleagues of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Resolution 369. This resolution aims to affirm the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over the entire island and commemorate the 50th anniversary of Turkey's invasion and occupation of the northern region of Cyprus.

Cyprus is small island country situated in the western Mediterranean. It's robust history and culture goes back to the era of Ancient Greece, and hosts diverse ethnic groups, the vast majority of whom are Greek Cypriots. Like many Greek Cypriots, my grandfather, Savvas, immigrated to the United States to find his own version of the American Dream- many others from our community weren't as fortunate.

Half a century ago, on July 20th, 1974, Turkey invaded and has since illegally occupied the island's northern region, dubbing it the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," a term aimed at undermining Cypriot sovereignty claims, and one that is not recognized by the international community.<sup>1</sup> This invasion resulted

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Resolution 541 (1983) retrieved from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/58970?ln=en&v=pdf>

in the displacement of thousands of Greek Cypriots from their homes, creating a humanitarian crisis that persists to this day. The United Nations has maintained peacekeeping forces on the island since 1964, demonstrating the international community's commitment to stability in the region.

This resolution underscores the ongoing plight of Cyprus, divided by a hostile occupation that challenges Western values. Turkey, a country that is dealing with serious instability within its own borders, has maintained diplomatic relationships with countries and terrorist organizations such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, China, and Russia. Turkey cannot be ignored as a rising international threat. That is why we've seen on going military training exercises between allies such as Cyprus, the United States, Israel, and Greece to show deterrence to this growing threat in the Mediterranean region. Ohio, as a state with influence over U.S. foreign policy through its congressional delegation, must not overlook this issue that has been ongoing for decades.

I'm heartened to see similar resolutions being proposed in many other State Legislatures, demonstrating solidarity with the Cypriot-American community. Thank you for your attention, and I'm prepared to address any questions you may have.