



Senator Nathan H. Manning
Sponsor Testimony: Senate Bill 195
Establishing the Ohio-Ireland Trade Commission

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 195. This bill would create the Ohio-Ireland Trade Commission and further foster the relationship between the two regions. This bill is the companion bill to House Bill 455, which was voted out unanimously by this committee on June 12th.

Ohio and Ireland already have deep ties both economically and culturally. According to the Irish Embassy, Ohio imports \$18.5 billion in goods from Ireland from 2016-2020. In turn, Ohio sent \$5.8 billion in service exports and an additional \$539 million in goods exports to Ireland. Additionally, 1.5 million Ohioans have Irish heritage, and the state hosts the largest three-day Irish festival in the world in Dublin, Ohio.

In the past year, two major developments took place to enhance our diplomatic and economic relationship. In May 2023, Ireland's Aer Lingus launched a new direct flight between Cleveland Hopkins International Airport and Dublin Airport. Six months later, in November, the Irish Embassy established its first Consulate office in Ohio, located in Downtown Cleveland. This Trade Commission would be another important step in strengthening Ohio's relationship with Ireland, benefiting both regions in the process.

The nine-member Commission will study potential means of advancing the economic, educational, and cultural relationship between Ohio and Ireland. Among the subjects the Commission would study are the following:

- Bilateral trade and investment;
- Policy issues of mutual interest;
- Business and academic exchanges;
- Mutual economic support;
- Mutual investment in infrastructure;
- Other issues as determined by the Commission

Membership of the Commission would include:

- Six members of the General Assembly – three senators appointed by the Senate President and three representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House – who have knowledge of, or current or past involvement in, organizations that promote Irish affairs, or have interest in the wellbeing of trade relations between Ohio and Ireland;
- Three members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, as follows:
 - One member who represents a state institution of higher education;
 - One member who represents the Ohio Chamber of Commerce or a successor organization that advances business interests in Ohio;
 - One member who represents Irish American communities or interest in Ohio.

In addition to the previously mentioned benefits, this Commission is at no cost to the taxpayer, as the Commission would raise the funds to do its work to visit Ireland and host visiting Irish delegations.

My office has been working closely with Senator Mark Daly, deputy chairman of the Irish Senate, who has worked with other legislatures and passed similar legislation in New Jersey and West Virginia. In addition, we have worked with Mark Owens, who is serving as the first Honorary Consul for Ohio's Consulate Office. I would like to thank both of them for their guidance and assistance.

Ohio and Ireland have an opportunity to formally network and collaborate through this Trade Commission. We can explore how our shared industries, trade opportunities, tourism, and cultural ties can enhance our burgeoning relationship. We look forward to working with the Committee as this legislation moves forward.

Thank you again for allowing me to deliver testimony on Senate Bill 195. I would be glad to answer questions at this time.