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Dear Chairwoman John, Vice Chair Dean and Ranking Member Brennan:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of House Concurrent Resolution 5 and to share my perspective on the importance of the work that the Ohio commission of the American 250 celebration is doing. I want to especially thank the commission for their diligent work in preparing for this celebration and for the invaluable time that has been contributed to the committee by representatives Adam Holmes and Joe Miller.

The American 250 Ohio Commission is leading Ohio's efforts to prepare the state to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States on July 4th of 2026. The report that they have already produced, "Recommendations to the people of Ohio," is a fantastic blueprint of how we can accomplish the goal to commemorate this important event in national history.

These statewide events and programs will be tremendous and engaging for all Ohioans. I think the proposed film Festival would be a fascinating event to attend. But overall, I can confidently state that the importance of this event cannot be understated. The impact it could have on regional and local communities would be astounding to observe. In the county I'm from, Richland County, there are over 20 small historical museums, along with a variety of other museums. All of these institutions would be able to take advantage of the groundwork that's being laid by the American 250 Ohio commission and increase attendance and awareness during this time. Big celebrations like this focus communities on the importance of history and the impact it has on our lives.

Indulge me as I tell a personal story: when I was 12 years old, and yes, I know I'm dating myself here, it was the bicentennial of 1976. It was a big event in my small town! I grew up in Whellersburg, Ohio - down on the river between Portsmouth and Ironton. I remember that whole year of school, we learned about the history of Ohio and United States and how our fantastic nation came to be. I grew up in a family of 11 children. My father, a World War II veteran, was very proud of his country. He felt it was important that his children understood the history of America and Ohio and how we came to live in this great state. He was so convinced of this that he even allowed us to paint the old farm pickup truck in red, white, and blue, and we must have gone to over a dozen parades that year as a family. Dad would always be wearing his uniform and all the kids were either riding in the back of the pickup truck or running around passing out candy. My older brothers and sisters painted fire hydrants in town and gave speeches in high school and in 4-H. As you can tell, this was an important event in my youth; I learned the importance of patriotism and the importance of community.

I believe the 250th celebration is extremely important for Ohio's local communities. Without this celebration, we will have an entire generation of Ohio citizens that never celebrated the birth of our country in a big way. Yes, we celebrate the 4th of July every year, but nothing has ever compared to the celebration of 1976. I'm sure those here that were present for this celebration remember the excitement of that year and have many fond memories of family, friends, and community. I think, no, I know, that if done right, and with the guidance of the commission, that July 4th of 2026 will become a celebration that communities and families look back on with fondness and nostalgia, and will say that 2026 was a great year and that they learned so much about our nation and our state.

So, in closing, I would like to again thank Chairwoman John and this Committee for their support of House Concurrent Resolution number 5 and the opportunities that the American 250 Ohio celebration will provide for communities and families to create a lasting memory of joy and patriotism.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely, Fred Boll, Executive Director
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