

Madam Chair Ryden, members of the committee, I thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Rocky Germano and I am here to oppose House Bill 1135.

My dad was born in a small house on West 40th Avenue & Osage Street in what was known as Denver's "Little Italy" – this was at the turn of the century. My grand parents came to this country as poor Italian immigrants fleeing poverty in their native land as did millions of European descendants.

Dad graduated from North High School in 1938 and played professional baseball with the St. Louis Browns until he went into the Army in 1942 serving on the Western front under the command of General George Patton. As you will recall from your history books our country was pitted against the Axis powers composed of Germany, Japan and Italy. Yes, he fought in the name of his country the United States of America. He was in his words an American first and proud of his Italian heritage. My dad did not say a lot about fighting in the Battle of the Bulge nor the fact that he was fighting against his Italian relatives. In fact Italian citizens like my family was referred to as "Enemy Aliens". Over 1.5 million Americans of Italians of decent volunteered to fight for our freedoms. One of those "freedoms" being the freedom of speech. His generation has been referred to as the "Greatest Generation" and appropriately so because our country came together as a Nation to fight for our precious freedoms.

House bill 1135 overlooks our right to free speech to express our gratitude to the brave people years ago who discovered the Americas which ultimately provided a course for our ancestors to become citizens of this the greatest county in world. I would suggest we seek not a name change but a change in attitude. We are all Americans and we should recognize we have evolved as a melting pot of many people seeking to find freedom and a safe place to live.

And so I am here today testifying against HB 1135 on behalf of my dad and all the men and women not only of Italian decent but all immigrants who risked their lives and in many cases lost their lives in the defense of our freedom. A freedom to celebrate a Federal Holiday --- Columbus Day.

I respectfully ask that you vote against this bill and retain the name of Columbus Day and honor all those who have served in the name of freedom. I thank you for your time.