

**Testimony before
The Ohio House State Government and Elections Committee
On House Bill 477
Presented by Juanita Sanchez,
SEIU Local 3
May 1, 2008**

Chairman Daniels and members of the Committee, I am Juanita Sanchez, representing the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and I am here today to express our overwhelming dismay about House Bill 477.

In Ohio, SEIU represents over 25,000 employees. Nationally SEIU is the largest health care and social service union. Our diverse membership works in long-term care facilities, hospitals, as well as the public sector. We also are the largest union representing property service workers.

Since the turn of the last century and before, America has been the beacon of hope and prosperity to the entire world. Millions of immigrants entered Ellis Island in search of a better life, a better future and a home for their families. Immigrants came here with different languages, cultures, foods and skills that are now embedded into the fabric of the American tapestry and have moved this country forward with their labor, their faith, and most importantly their families.

Though our immigrant history is often romanticized today, the reality was, at the turn of the 20th century, that many immigrant groups, including the Italians, the Irish, the Germans, the Poles were ostracized, forced into settlement communities and experienced some of the most horrific labor and living conditions.

Now in 2008 the new immigrants that are entering our state and our nation are not coming through Ellis Island, they are crossing the northern, southern borders of our country. While some still come seeking political asylum or religious freedom, all are seeking a better life for themselves and their families. And today the wealth of their presence in our Great State of Ohio is felt from the men and woman who cook in the kitchen of your favorite restaurant, build the home that your family might move into, work the fields to harvest the food you eat, or even perhaps clean the building where you work.

You see, the America that we all love and are proud to be citizens of, is in part, only as great as its newest immigrant communities that are arriving today, tomorrow and in the future.

We believe House Bill 477 is a step in the wrong direction. Our concern is that if the Ohio General Assembly adopted House Bill 477 that it will do the following:

- Foster resentment among native-born Ohio residents towards a growing diverse 21st century Ohio
- Force many men, woman, and children to live in the shadows of our society
- Lead to a public workforce that is not diverse in language or related skills—with no incentive to pursue such a highly developed workforce
- Create a segregated State and segregated communities

As a symbol, we fear House Bill 477 will lead to the following:

- It would deter residents of Ohio from studying foreign languages and cultures that would help make Ohio more competitive on a global level. This could impact many things ranging from fewer Ohio students from wanting to study abroad, to our reduced pursuit of foreign investment that is today being courted by some Ohio's most prominent corporations
- It also impedes the creation of a united Ohio and is bound to lead others to view our state as one that is not welcoming to any persons with different heritage.

This is not the vision of what we want Ohio to become. Nor does it reflect the reality that is Ohio in the 21st century.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our position on House Bill 477, If you have any questions, I will do my best to answer them.