

WHEREAS, the city of Chicago and the Chicagoland areas host the largest Bulgarian Community in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, 2023 marks the 80th anniversary of the Bulgarian people's rescue of the Bulgarian Jews; the 115th anniversary of the full Independence of Bulgaria; the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Bulgaria; and the 145th anniversary of the reestablishment of Bulgaria; and

WHEREAS, Bulgaria was admitted into and permitted to display an exhibit at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, an event hailed by the Chicago Tribune as the first diplomatic recognition accorded to Bulgaria as an independent state; and

WHEREAS, Aleko Konstantinov, a famous Bulgarian writer, recounted his journey to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in his book, *To Chicago and Back*, which became instrumental in encouraging generations of Bulgarians to immigrate to Chicago; and

WHEREAS, in the Spring of 1943, Bulgarian politicians, administrators, officers, clergymen, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens resisted Nazi pressure to deport Bulgarian Jews to Nazi concentration camps and, in doing so, rescued approximately 50,000 Bulgarian Jews from the worst terrors of the Nazi regime; and

WHEREAS, the saving of Bulgarian Jews during WWII is a valuable lesson about the essential role of civic mobilization in support of freedom, democracy, rule of law, and human rights. It is a powerful, positive example that inspires countries around the world to fight modern manifestations of antisemitism; and

WHEREAS, during the 20th century, the city of Chicago became a safe haven for thousands of Bulgarian refugees and political dissidents who fled from the devastation and horrors occasioned by regional unrests and the repressive terrors of the authoritarian regime; and

WHEREAS, since the beginning of the unprovoked Russian aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Bulgaria has been consistent in its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and has provided military, technical, and humanitarian aid for Ukraine; and

WHEREAS, the Bulgarian Government continues to champion Ukraine on its assertion to join the European Union and NATO, and the Bulgarian Government is willing to participate in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine; and

WHEREAS, the Illinois House of Representatives and Illinois Senate adopted resolutions declaring March 2023 as Bulgarian American Heritage Month in the State of Illinois, recognizing the contribution of the Bulgarian community to the social, cultural, civil, and economic development of the State, and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and members of the City Council of the City of Chicago gathered this 7th day of November 2023 do hereby recognize and applaud the historic significance of the 145th anniversary of the re-establishment of the sovereign and independent Republic of Bulgaria; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we reaffirm the bonds of friendship and cooperation that have existed between the city of Chicago, the Bulgarian-American Community in Chicago, and the Republic of Bulgaria for the past 130 years, and we commit to strengthening these bonds; and be it further

RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria in Chicago as a token of appreciation and blessed wishes to the Bulgarian-American Community and people in Bulgaria.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilbert Villegas", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gilbert Villegas, Chairman
Committee on Economic, Capital, and Technology Development