

Grand Lodge of New York
Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America
NYS Commission for Social Justice
2101 Bellmore Avenue | Bellmore, NY 11710
516.785.4623 | nysosia.org

June 24, 2020

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader, New York State Senate
188 State Street Room 907 - LOB
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Senator Stewart-Cousins:

The New York State Commission for Social Justice is the anti-defamation arm of the New York Grand Lodge, Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America. The Commission has, throughout the years, engaged in a wide variety of activities geared toward accomplishing its twin goals of promoting a positive image of Italian Americans and fighting bias, bigotry, and defamation.

We are deeply troubled with Senate Bill S8553 proposed by Senator Jessica Ramos and Senator Brad Hoylman to remove Columbus Day as a holiday in New York State. After years of discrimination, and a horrible lynching, the largest ever in America, that took place in New Orleans in 1891, Christopher Columbus became the source of pride for Italian Americans. There has been a lot of talk about what Columbus did or did not do in 1492, but one fact is clear, he did not rape, murder or bring slavery to these shores. History is being rewritten and, in some cases, distorted to create a negative narrative about Columbus.

Italian Americans remain the only group of people in America, where it remains acceptable to negatively stereotype in the media, Hollywood, or television shows. Our Italian American community looks at this bill as one more slap in the face to our community and attack on our heritage and culture. There is enough anger and hatred going on in America today with the disgusting murder of George Floyd. We need to bring people together and not tear them apart. This Bill, if passed, would do just that, and create one more part of our great mosaic in our State to feel anger and hurt. We are urging Senate Bill S8553 to be pulled in fairness and decency to the over two million Italian Americans in the State of New York.

We thank you in advance for a speedy response.

Sincerely,

Anthony Naccarato
Anthony Naccarato, President
Grand Lodge of New York, OSDIA

John A. Fratta
John A. Fratta, Chairman
NYS Commission for Social Justice