

Good morning all,

Thank you for your time and consideration.

My name is Alisa DiGiacomo; I am a fifth-generation Italian American in Colorado and a resident of Jefferson County. I am here today in support of replacing Columbus Day as a Colorado state holiday with Francis Xavier Cabrini Day.

For months now, I have visited with individuals both for and against this idea, including members of the Hispanic, Chicano, Latino, American Indian, African American, Vietnamese, Irish American and Italian American communities. Thru personal connection and conversation, each exchange has been respectful, dynamic and in the end, positive. Instead of division, I have found solidarity in the desire to honor those who have come before us and the ways in which our ancestor's sacrifices and achievements have shaped our lives today. Likewise, all have hope that our children and grandchildren will remember and appreciate the choices and opportunities they have, as afforded them by the hard work and sacrifice of the generations before them.

For those that may be unaware of her life and legacy, Francis Xavier Cabrini was born in Italy in 1850. In 1889, she came to the United States to help immigrants in Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn. Three years later, she arrived in Colorado to help Denver's poor Italian immigrants. After establishing a convent and school in the heart of Denver's Little Italy, she built the Queen of Heaven Orphanage and later a summer camp for orphan's, today known as Mother Cabrini Shrine. Colorado's shrine is one of three in the United States with a second in New York and the third in Chicago.

In addition, to her works in Colorado, New York and Chicago, Francis Xavier Cabrini established institutions in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Mississippi, Washington State and California. She was a champion of immigrants and the poor. During her lifetime, there were many orphaned children and sick people with no place to turn and she cared for them. Many were uneducated, and she established schools for them. Her social service and outreach programs included industrial arts lessons for young women, visits to city hospital wards, jails, prisons, mines and plantations. Cabrini did this primarily with volunteers and private donations.

So why does Francis Xavier Cabrini deserve a day of recognition as a Colorado state holiday over others? The answer in part is timing. The time has come to add a woman to the list of state holidays for Colorado. A woman with a direct connection to Colorado, a woman that represents the voices of many diverse individuals and communities, and a humanitarian whose life and work have the power to inspire and influence positive change now and in the future.

Cabrini Day also offers a way for Colorado to let go of past conflicts. While other ideas have come and gone as a means to address the divisive views of Coloradans in October, Cabrini Day is resonating with many. Although not a perfect solution, Cabrini Day is a strong compromise. One that is welcoming and allows many more individuals to celebrate. Cabrini Day is an opportunity in the present to continue the good works of Frances Xavier Cabrini. It is a positive path forward, and it has the potential to make Colorado better for all who live here and those that visit our beautiful state.

Imagine a day filled with community service and fun, culminated by a feast with foods from many cultures and multiple voices sharing stories of pride for where they come from, who has

influenced and shaped their lives and what their hopes for the future might be. A day of conversation. A day of kindness, compassion and community.

It is for these reasons, that I support the establishment of Francis Xavier Cabrini Day as a Colorado state holiday, and that I respectfully request your support to establish Cabrini Day as a holiday that welcomes and celebrates the many diverse people and histories in Colorado. A day that encourages us to find the various ways that our own communities and traditions coincide with Frances Xavier Cabrini's message of kindness and compassion. A day of goodwill, tolerance and respect for the heritage and culture of others. A day to make us stronger by acknowledging our uniqueness and celebrating our common roots.

Alisa DiGiacomo

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Letters - Alisa DiGiacomo  
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