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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE
EDUCATION COMMISSION

Introduced By: Senators Goldin, Miller, Gallo, and Paolino

Date Introduced: April 23, 2021

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative Findings.

2 The general assembly finds and declares that:

3 (1) In 2000, the Rhode Island general assembly passed, and the governor signed into law,
4 "Genocide and Human Rights Education," (Pub. L. 2000, ch. 511, § 1) requiring the Rhode Island
5 department of education to "develop curricular material on genocide and human rights issues and
6 guidelines for the teaching of that material".

7 (2) In 2011, the State of Rhode Island passed into law "Genocide Education in Secondary
8 Schools" (Pub. L. 2011, ch. 45, § 1; Pub. L. 2011, ch. 70, § 1) which emphasized a need to adhere
9 to making genocide curriculum materials available including, but not limited to, the Holocaust,
10 Armenia, Cambodia, and Darfur.

11 (3) In 2016, the Rhode Island general assembly passed, and the governor signed into law,
12 Pub. L. 2016, ch. 92, § 2 and Pub. L. 2016, ch. 104, § 2, to require that the Holocaust and genocide
13 be taught in public middle and high schools.

14 (4) Throughout the years, the general assembly has consistently passed resolutions
15 condemning the Holocaust and genocides. Since the passage of the legislation into law, to require
16 Holocaust and genocide education in its schools, the general assembly has recognized its
17 importance by honoring its passage with continued resolutions of its observance.

18 (5) The governor, legislators, and community leaders have always made it a priority to

1 attend and participate in Holocaust and genocide memorials and other related events to emphasize
2 the continued need to recognize the horrible tragedies and atrocities committed to ancestors of
3 Rhode Island state community members.

4 SECTION 2. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by
5 adding thereto the following chapter:

6 CHAPTER 93.1

7 THE RHODE ISLAND HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION COMMISSION [SEE
8 TITLE 16 CHAPTER 97 - THE RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION ACT]

9 **16-93.1-1. Short title.**

10 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "The Rhode Island Holocaust and
11 Genocide Education Commission".

12 **16-93.1-2. Definitions.**

13 As used in this chapter, the following words and terms shall have the following meanings
14 unless the context shall clearly indicate another or different meaning or intent:

15 (1) "Genocide" means any act committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in substantial
16 part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group such as:

17 (i) Killing members of that group;

18 (ii) Causing serious bodily injury to members of that group;

19 (iii) Causing permanent impairment of the mental faculties of members of the group
20 through drugs, torture or similar techniques;

21 (iv) Subjecting the group to conditions of life that are intended to cause the physical
22 destruction of the group in whole or in part;

23 (v) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; or

24 (vi) Forcibly transferring or attempting to transfer children of the group to another group,
25 as defined by the Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987 (18 USC 1091).

26 (2) "Holocaust" means the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and
27 murder of approximately six million (6,000,000) Jews and five million (5,000,000) other
28 individuals by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

29 **16-93.1-3. Holocaust and genocide education commission.**

30 (a) There is hereby created a permanent commission to be known as the Rhode Island
31 Holocaust and genocide education commission to consist of thirteen (13) members: one of whom
32 shall be the Rhode Island commissioner of elementary and secondary education, or designee; one
33 of whom shall be the president of the Rhode Island Superintendent's Association, or designee; one
34 of whom shall be a member of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals, or designee; one

1 of whom shall be the president of the Rhode Island chapter of the American Federation of Teachers,
2 or designee; one of whom shall be the president of the Rhode Island Chapter of the National
3 Education Association, or designee; one of whom shall be the president of the Rhode Island
4 Association of School Committees, or designee; and seven (7) of whom shall be appointed by the
5 governor to serve a term of three (3) years, at least three (3) of whom shall be involved in Holocaust
6 and genocide education or have a personal connection or experience with the Holocaust or
7 genocide; and at least three (3) of whom shall have expertise in investigating, analyzing, or
8 researching the Holocaust or genocide.

9 (b) When making appointments, the governor shall ensure that appointees represent diverse
10 communities affected by genocide.

11 (c) A member of the commission may be removed by the governor for inefficiency, neglect
12 of duty, misconduct, or malfeasance in office, after being given a written statement of the charges
13 and an opportunity to be publicly heard on such charges by the general assembly.

14 (d) Vacancies in the commission shall be filled in the manner provided under subsection
15 (a) of this section. Any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the expiration of the
16 term for which the member's predecessor was appointed shall hold office for the remainder of that
17 term. Any appointed member shall continue in office subsequent to the expiration of that member's
18 term until the member's successor takes office.

19 **16-93.1-4. Meetings and by-laws.**

20 (a) The commission shall meet at least six (6) times during a calendar year.

21 (b) At the first meeting, the commission shall elect a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and
22 other officers from the voting members.

23 (c) The commission shall adopt by-laws governing the commission.

24 **16-93.1-5. Quorum.**

25 A quorum at the meeting shall consist of seven (7) voting members present.

26 **16-93.1-6. Expenses.**

27 Members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for
28 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

29 **16-93.1-7. Duties and responsibilities of the commission.**

30 The commission shall:

31 (1) Gather and disseminate Holocaust and genocide information throughout this state;

32 (2) Take inventory of current statewide Holocaust and genocide education programs and
33 initiatives, and partner with the department of elementary and secondary education to prepare a
34 comprehensive educational program to fill program and initiative gaps;

1 (3) Plan and publicize Holocaust and Genocide Remembrance Month Activities to be
2 commemorated annually in April of each year, and promote public awareness of issues relating to
3 the Holocaust and genocide education through public education programs;

4 (4) Advise and educate the governor, general assembly, and state departments and agencies
5 regarding the nature, magnitude and priorities of Holocaust and genocide education, and develop
6 policies and programs to address those needs;

7 (5) Seek opportunities to provide resources for schools to effectively teach about the
8 Holocaust and genocide;

9 (6) Apply for and accept grants and gifts from public and private sources to be administered
10 by the commission or subcontracted to local public or nonprofit agencies that shall use the grants
11 and gifts for the purpose intended;

12 (7) Review and approve grants that are administered or subcontracted by the commission;

13 (8)(i) Establish advisory committees for special subjects, as needed, to facilitate and
14 maximize community participation and subject matter expertise in the operation of the commission;

15 (ii) Advisory committees shall be comprised of members representing community
16 organizations, charitable institutions, elementary and secondary schools, higher education
17 institutions, faith-based organizations, public officials, and other persons as determined by the
18 office;

19 (9) Establish relationships with local and state governments, federal officials, nonprofit
20 organizations, and the private sector to promote and ensure the highest standards of Holocaust and
21 genocide education;

22 (10) Endeavor to ensure that Holocaust and genocide survivors, liberators, educators, and
23 others involved in Holocaust and genocide education have access to decision-making bodies in
24 local, state, national, and international departments, agencies, and genocide education and
25 memorial organizations; and

26 (11) Submit a written annual report of the commission's activities, accomplishments, and
27 recommendations to the governor, the president of the senate, and the speaker of the house of
28 representatives.

29 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE
EDUCATION COMMISSION

- 1 This act would create the Holocaust and genocide education commission to:
- 2 (1) Gather and disseminate Holocaust and genocide information;
- 3 (2) Review current statewide Holocaust and genocide education programs and initiatives,
- 4 and partner with the state department of elementary and secondary education to prepare a program;
- 5 (3) Promote public awareness of issues relating to Holocaust and genocide education;
- 6 (4) Advise and educate the governor, general assembly, and state departments and agencies
- 7 regarding the nature, magnitude and priorities of Holocaust and genocide education, and develop
- 8 policies and programs to address those needs; and
- 9 (5) Seek opportunities to provide resources for schools to effectively teach about the
- 10 Holocaust and genocide.
- 11 This act would take effect upon passage.

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