



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

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Rep. Smola Supports Genocide Education Bill

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means) recently supported legislation that provides for the teaching of genocide education to middle and high school students, beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year.

House Bill 4249, *An Act concerning genocide education*, was engrossed on a vote of 157-2 in the House of Representatives on November 16. The bill is an amended version of Senate Bill 2557, which was previously passed by the Senate on October 21.

House Bill 4249 requires school districts to educate students in middle school and high school about the history of genocide, consistent with the standards articulated in the history and social science curriculum framework adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Representative Smola said the bill allows schools to partner with community-based organizations, including municipal human rights commissions, to help facilitate this instruction.

Genocide education will be structured to promote the understanding of human rights issues, with a focus on the inhumanity of genocide; the history and patterns of genocide that demonstrate how hatred against national, ethnic, racial or religious groups impacts nations and societies; and the rejection of the targeting of a specific population and other forms of prejudice that can lead to violence and genocide.

Representative Smola noted that the bill establishes a Genocide Education Trust Fund, which will be partly supported by revenue from fines imposed for hate crimes and civil rights violations. The Fund will be used to develop materials for students detailing the underlying causes, international reaction, progression and aftermath of genocide, and to provide professional development training for teachers.

House Bill 4249 also calls for the establishment of a grant program to promote student instruction on the history of genocide. The bill grants the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education the authority to prioritize funds for underserved communities, including public schools and school districts with high concentrations of economically-disadvantaged students or schools that have experienced an incident that was motivated by racial, ethnic or religious bias.

Under the bill, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education will be required to file two annual reports. One report will disclose the collected revenues, expenditures and projected revenues associated with the Genocide Education Trust Fund, while the other will detail the progress of genocide education programs in Massachusetts, including the number of hours of instruction offered, the grade levels it is being taught at, and the title and description of the course in which the instruction is integrated.

For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617)722-2100.

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