March 23, 2019

Town Clerk Jennifer West
Portsmouth Town Hall
2200 East Main Rd.
Portsmouth, RI 02871

Dear Jennifer West:

For the past nineteen years, the Town of Portsmouth has participated in our program to have the Armenian flag raised in memory of the Ottoman Turkish government’s attempt to eliminate the Christian Armenians from their ancestral lands through planned Genocide during World War 1. The flag is to be flown on April 24th, which is the date when 300 Armenian leaders, doctors, lawyers, priests and others were hung in the center of Constantinople, thus beginning the systematic planned elimination of the Armenians from their homeland, which they had occupied for over 2000 years.

It is widely known and accepted by scholars, historians and most of the civilized world as the first Genocide of the 20th Century, a precursor to the Holocaust. Enclosed are two resolutions from 2018: H.R. 8046 which proclaims April 24th as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day as well as H. Res. 8185 which strongly supports Holocaust and Genocide Education in Rhode Island schools to prevent future genocides from occurring.

Armenians in Rhode Island and all over the world contribute to their cultural, educational, political and religious communities. There are about 12,000 Armenians in the State of Rhode Island and every one of them would be pleased and honored if you would continue to fly our flag in memory of the 1,500,000 Armenian men, women and children who lost their lives during that period. If you need the flag replaced due to wear or it is missing, please let us know.

The flag is to be flown with the red stripe on top.

Thank you,

Stephen J. Elmasian
Armenian National Committee of Rhode Island
401-573-7888
steveelmasian@gmail.com
WHEREAS, In 2016, the Jewish Alliance of Greater Rhode Island and the Armenian community spearheaded the drive to amend the Rhode Island General Laws in order to require more comprehensive and inclusive educational requirements on the subjects of Holocaust and Genocide; and

WHEREAS, Resultantly, House Bill 7488 SUB A and Senate Bill 2396 SUB A were passed by the General Assembly and subsequently signed into law by the Governor on June 17, 2016; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island's law now requires the Rhode Island Board of Education to include instruction on the subjects of Holocaust and Genocide studies in an appropriate place in the curriculum, for all middle and high school students; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island and Michigan were two of the first states to enact legislation mandating such education subsequently, New York, New Jersey, Florida, Illinois, California, Indiana, and Pennsylvania have passed laws requiring some form of Holocaust and Genocide Education, and Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Virginia and a dozen other states have committed to enacting similar legislation; and

WHEREAS, The Holocaust is defined as the destruction of six million European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Genocide is defined as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" and "... a series of purposeful actions by a perpetrator(s) to destroy a collectivity through mass or selective
murders of group members and suppressing the biological and social reproduction of the
collectivity"; and

WHEREAS, Holocaust and Genocide Education seeks to enhance education, cultural
production, and public memory about the incidence of these atrocities – in the distant and not-so-
distant past. Educators must embrace the teaching and study of the topic and students must be
motivated to employ critical thinking skills; and

WHEREAS, Holocaust and Genocide Education has additional prevalence in that it
demonstrates what can happen when bullying, hate speech, and other forms of intimidation, often
faced by today's students, are allowed to escalate into stereotyping, prejudice, racism, and worse;
and

WHEREAS, It is essential to our state and our nation that we educate our youth about the
millions of men, women and children who have and continue to be slaughtered and ostracized
simply because of their beliefs and their heritage, or their strengths or their frailties, and we must
firmly avow that the atrocities of the Holocaust and Genocide will never be repeated; now,
therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
Providence Plantations hereby strongly supports Holocaust and Genocide Education in Rhode
Island's schools, reaffirms our pledge to work to eradicate bigotry, prejudice, brutality and
injustice, and urges Rhode Island educators and students to learn about and learn from these
atrocities so they may never blight our world again; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Commissioner of the Rhode Island
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Rhode Island Holocaust Museum, the
Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, the Jewish Community Center of Rhode Island, the Armenian
Assembly of America in Washington, and the Armenian National Committee in Washington.
WHEREAS, The Armenian Genocide was conceived and carried out by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923, and resulted in the deportation of nearly 2,000,000 Armenians, of whom 1,500,000 men, women, and children were killed, and the remaining 500,000 survived but were expelled from their homes. This act succeeded in the elimination of the Armenians from their historic ancestral homeland where they had resided for over 2,500 years; and

WHEREAS, On May 24, 1915, for the first time ever, the Allied Powers of England, France, and Russia, jointly issued a statement explicitly charging another government of committing "a crime against humanity"; and

WHEREAS, This joint statement declared, "the Allied Governments announce publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold personally responsible for these crimes all members of the Ottoman Government, as well as those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres";

and

WHEREAS, United States Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Sr. explicitly described the policy of the Ottoman Empire's government to the United States Department of State as "a campaign of race extermination," and on July 16, 1915, was informed by United States Secretary of State Robert Lansing that the "Department approves your procedure . . . to stop Armenian persecution"; and

WHEREAS, The post-World War I Turkish government indicted the top leaders involved in the organization and execution of the Armenian Genocide and in the "massacre and destruction
of the Armenians," and in a series of court-martials, officials of the Young Turk regime were
charged, tried and convicted, for organizing and executing massacres against the Armenian
people; and

WHEREAS, In 1948, the United Nations War Crimes Commission invoked the
Armenian Genocide as "precisely . . . one of the types of acts which the modern term 'crimes
against humanity' is intended to cover" as a precedent for the Nuremberg tribunals; and

WHEREAS, The United States National Archives and Record Administration holds
extensive and thorough documentation on the Armenian Genocide, especially in its holdings
under Record Group 59 of the United States Department of State, files 867.00 and 867.40, which
are open and widely available to the public and interested institutions; and

WHEREAS, The United States Holocaust Memorial Council, an independent federal
agency, unanimously resolved on April 30, 1981, that the United States Holocaust Memorial
Museum would include the Armenian Genocide in the museum and has since done so; and

WHEREAS, When one enters the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, there is an
exhibit depicting Adolf Hitler, who on ordering his military commanders to attack Poland without
provocation in 1939, dismissed objections by stating "[w]ho, after all, speaks today of the
annihilation of the Armenians?", thus setting the stage for the Holocaust; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
Providence Plantations hereby recognizes April 24, 2018, as "Armenian Genocide Remembrance
Day" in the State of Rhode Island; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this House respectfully requests the President of the United States and
the United States Congress to call on the government of Turkey to face history and acknowledge
this crime of genocide committed by the Ottoman Turks in 1915 and further, urge the Turkish
government to make restitution for the loss of lives, confiscated properties, and general unlawful
deportations, separating the indigenous population from their homeland; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this House expresses its deepest sympathy to the Armenian-American
community of Rhode Island and assures them that this genocide will always be commemorated
and never forgotten; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Honorable Donald Trump, President of the
United States, the Rhode Island Congressional Delegation, the Honorable Gina Raimondo,
Governor of the State of Rhode Island, the Armenian Assembly of America in Washington, and
the Armenian National Committee in Washington.