

**REVENUE: No revenue impact**

**FISCAL: No fiscal impact**

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<b>Action:</b>	Be Adopted as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed
<b>Vote:</b>	4 - 0 - 1
<b>Yeas:</b>	Atkinson, Burdick, Ferrioli, Devlin
<b>Nays:</b>	-
<b>Exc.:</b>	Metsger
<b>Prepared By:</b>	Erin Seiler, Administrator
<b>Meeting Dates:</b>	4/24

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:** Expresses legislative support for efforts of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to promote the peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims in the Republic of Turkey. Requests the Republic of Turkey uphold and safeguard religious and human rights, and grant to the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate rights and independence in perpetuity.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- History of Greek Orthodox Christians in Constantinople
- Recognition of the religious independence of the Ecumenical Patriarch
- Treatment of religious minorities in Turkey

**EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:** Replaces the measure.

**BACKGROUND:** Established in 37 A.D., in what is now Istanbul, Turkey, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople is the leader of Orthodox Christians around the world. The Ecumenical Patriarchate has been a religious presence in the state of Turkey since its establishment in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. However, the government of Turkey does not recognize the use of the term or title Ecumenical for any religious activity, instead regarding him as the spiritual leader of a Greek minority. The Turkish government has taken measures to weaken the institution of the Ecumenical Patriarchate through the denial of legal identity, confiscation of churches and other property, and replacing the Patriarch with a state-controlled church entity called the Turkish-Orthodox Patriarchate.

Human rights groups have protested against conditions placed by the secular government of Turkey on the Ecumenical Patriarch, citing the actions taken by the Turkish government against the Patriarchate, as violations of Article 9 on Religious Freedom of European Convention on Human Rights and Articles 14 and 37-45 of the Lausanne Treaty regarding minorities. Human rights groups have also identified the failure of the government to protect the welfare of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, who has been the target of bomb attacks (in 1993, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2004), and prevent the desecration of patriarchal cemeteries and personal assaults against the Ecumenical Patriarch. These groups are calling for intervention from the European Union, European Court of Human Rights, and other governments, on the behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to prevent the dissolution of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Senate Joint Resolution 16-A urges the government of Turkey to recognize the Ecumenical Patriarchate as a legal personality, cease prosecution of religious minorities and recognize and uphold the human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarch and its followers.