

HOUSE No. 4830

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, June 2, 2022.

The committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3389) of Bud L. Williams for legislation to authorize the acquisition of land, the development and construction of an underground railroad, civil rights and black heritage museum and cultural center in the city of Springfield, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4830) ought to pass.

For the committee,

CAROLE A. FIOLA.

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In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)

An Act to study the development of an underground railroad, civil rights and black heritage museum and cultural center in Springfield.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. (a) There shall be established, pursuant to section 2A of chapter 4 of the
2 General Laws, the Underground Railroad, Civil Rights, and Black Heritage Museum and
3 Cultural Center Task Force to study the creation of an underground railroad, civil rights and
4 black heritage museum and cultural center in Springfield.

5 (b) The construction and development of such a center in the city of Springfield will
6 serve as a catharsis important to alleviate some of the lingering negative effects of the institution
7 of slavery and the discrimination practiced against African Americans, which had state and
8 federal governmental statutory sanction. Additionally, such center will be able to further enhance
9 regional tourism, attract conferences and conventions, and large gatherings to Springfield,
10 thereby generating an influx of people from outside the commonwealth who would utilize the
11 tourist facilities and related businesses in every region of the commonwealth.

12 SECTION 2. (a) The work of the task force shall include but are not limited to: (i) a
13 brief study and review of the history of slavery, the underground railroad, and the fight for civil

14 rights in western Massachusetts; (ii) develop a proposal on the location of a center, looking at
15 sites in the area of Springfield specifically; (iii) establish a list of partner institutions and key
16 stakeholders which may be suitable to run or partner with the center; (iv) determine the cost,
17 timeline, and funding mechanisms; (v) establish criteria, requirements, duties and financial
18 responsibilities of an operator to operate and maintain any proposed center.

19 (b) Members of the task force shall consist of: the chairs of the joint committee on
20 racial equity, civil rights, and inclusion who shall serve as co-chairs, 1 member to be appointed
21 by the speaker of the house of representatives; 1 member to be appointed by the president of the
22 senate; the minority leader of the house of representatives, or their designee; the minority leader
23 of the senate, or their designee; 1 member to be appointed by the governor; the president of the
24 greater Springfield convention and visitors bureau, or their designee; the mayor of Springfield, or
25 their designee; executive director of the museum of African American history in Boston and
26 Nantucket, or their designee; the executive director of the Massachusetts cultural council, or their
27 designee; the chair of the black advisory commission, or their designee.

28 (c) The task force shall be allowed to seek the help of outside design and consulting
29 firms regarding the building, operation, and placement of a center, if such monies are made
30 available by the legislature.

31 (d) The schedule and work of the task force shall be dictated by the chairs. All
32 members of the task force will have a vote, and a simple majority shall constitute a consensus.
33 The chairs may choose to create subgroups to focus on specific work of the task force. Guests
34 may be invited to participate in meetings as speakers at the chair's discretion.

35 (e) The task force shall file a report with its findings to the clerks of the house of
36 representatives and senate not later than July 31, 2023.