



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

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CHAIRMAN
Committee on:
Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture

Joint Committee on the Judiciary
Statement of Representative Frank I. Smizik
On Behalf of House Bill 706

A Resolve to Establish a Special Commission to Investigate the Integration of
International Human Rights Standards into Massachusetts State Law and Policies

June 7, 2005

What is the problem:

Across Massachusetts our most vulnerable citizens suffer from unaffordable and insufficient housing, spiraling healthcare costs and under-funded education. These serious problems reflect a certain lack of determination to uphold human rights for everyone in the Commonwealth. While Massachusetts has made many efforts to correct these problems individually, it has not made an over-arching commitment to protecting and defending the basic rights to which we are all entitled. We have an obligation to acknowledge internationally accepted human rights standards, and to make every effort to increase social justice and equality.

What this bill does:

This bill proposes that Massachusetts establish a special commission to investigate how international human rights standards have been and could be integrated into existing Massachusetts law and policy. This would provide a pro-active value system and tools to define and articulate human rights violations and demand redress.

Why is this bill important to solving the problem:

This bill represents a vital first step towards making human rights a priority in Massachusetts. International human rights standards provide a valuable prism through which we can evaluate our own law and policies with regards to raising the health, safety and standards of living for everyone. A human rights framework can provide us with a universal standard for human dignity that values physical and mental integrity. These rights are guaranteed to each individual without discrimination of any kind, and we must



all work towards insuring that no person is denied such basic freedoms. The adoption of human rights language into our laws and policies can only help Massachusetts better provide for its' citizens. Working within a human rights framework will allow the commonwealth to find policies and procedures that will more efficiently and productively defend human rights and social justice for all citizens.

Our obligation towards protecting the safety, health, and welfare of everyone in the commonwealth demands that we find ways to integrate a human rights framework into our laws and policies. Therefore, I urge you to support HB 706 and ask that you give it a favorable vote out of committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank I. Smizik". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Frank I. Smizik