WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey refuses to recognize the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the head of the Greek Orthodox Christian Church which is a minority religion in Turkey; and

WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has confiscated most of the properties of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and has placed a 42 percent retroactive tax on the Balukli Hospital which is run by the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and

WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the candidates available for selection as the Ecumenical Patriarchate to Turkish nationals and reneged on its agreement to reopen to the Theological School at Halki, thus impeding training for the clergy; and

WHEREAS, The Theological School of Halki is the only educational institution for Orthodox Christianity in Turkey. It was closed in 1971 by Turkish authorities under a law requiring that higher education in religion and minority training be controlled by the state; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress passed a resolution expressing that the Orthodox Theological School of Halki in the Republic of Turkey must be reopened in order to promote religious freedom; and

WHEREAS, Turkey should restore Hagia Sophia, which has been turned into a museum, to its original purpose as a church; and

WHEREAS, The European Union, a group of nations with a common goal of promoting the peace and the well-being of its peoples, began accession negotiations with Turkey on October
WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria for accession to the European Union at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating candidate countries to have achieved certain levels of reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for the protection of minorities and human rights; and

WHEREAS, Under the terms of the draft European Union Constitution, current and prospective member nations should have the goal of eliminating discrimination based on any grounds, such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any opinion, national minority membership, property, birth, disability, age, or sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS, Turkey’s current treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership conditions and goals of the European Union; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations hereby urges Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and urges the European Union to deny Turkey membership in the European Union until Turkey changes its policies regarding the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Rhode Island Congressional Delegation.