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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

SENATE RESOLUTION

THANKING HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS, GERON OF AMERICA, FOR
HIS MANY YEARS OF FAITHFUL AND SELFLESS SERVICE TO THE AMERICAN
GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY AND WISHING HIM WELL IN HIS RETIREMENT

Introduced By: Senators Raptakis, Gallo, Nesselbush, Algieri, and Euer

Date Introduced: May 22, 2019

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios, Geron of America, was born
2 Demetrios Trakatellis in Thessaloniki, Greece on February 1, 1928, to Georgia and Christos
3 Trakatellis. His Eminence graduated from the University of Athens School of Theology with
4 distinction in 1950, and was ordained a Deacon in 1960, and a Priest in 1964; and

5 WHEREAS, His Eminence moved to the United States in 1965 and attended the Harvard
6 Graduate School of Arts and Sciences where he studied New Testament and Christian Origins
7 and was awarded a Ph.D. with distinction in 1972. He later returned to Athens to accept an
8 ecumenical position with the Archdiocese of Athens where he was responsible for the theological
9 education of the clergy and the ministry to the young. In 1977, he earned a second Doctorate
10 degree in theology from the University of Athens; and

11 WHEREAS, From 1983 to 1993, he served as the “Distinguished Professor of Biblical
12 Studies and Christian Origins” at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in
13 Brookline, Massachusetts, where he taught many of the most distinguished and respected Greek
14 Orthodox clergy members. He also taught as a visiting professor at the Harvard Divinity School;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, On August 19, 1999, His Eminence was elected Archbishop of America,
17 Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and head of the Eparchial. During his distinguished
18 twenty years as the leader of the Greek Orthodox community in the United States, Archbishop
19 Demetrios was a beloved figure who worked tirelessly to tend to his flock, to fight discrimination

1 where it existed, to comfort the sick and the poor, to help lead interfaith discussions and
2 cooperation with other religious communities, and to advocate for religious freedom and peace
3 across the globe; and

4 WHEREAS, Throughout his career, Archbishop Demetrios traveled the globe in support
5 of Christian and religious understanding and unity, and to advocate on behalf of those suffering
6 from injustice. Under his guidance and direction, the American Greek Orthodox Church worked
7 hard to respond to the needs of contemporary families, and established and broadened the scope
8 of the Church's Department of Philanthropy to meet the needs of the Greek Orthodox community
9 and to address contemporary cultural and social issues that were having an adverse impact on the
10 lives of many of the faithful; and

11 WHEREAS, Archbishop Demetrios, in his capacity as the leader of the Greek Orthodox
12 community in the United States, has met and engaged in discussions and dialogue with many
13 world leaders. He met and received Presidents William Jefferson Clinton, George W. Bush, and
14 Barak Obama, United States Secretaries of State, members of Congress, and numerous state, city
15 and local leaders. He has offered prayers at both the Republican and Democratic National
16 Conventions, and presented remarks at the White House commemorating Greek Independence
17 Day; and

18 WHEREAS, After the horrific and devastating attack on September 11, 2001, which
19 claimed the lives of nearly 3,000 people and also destroyed or damaged many landmark
20 structures including the edifice of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Demetrios
21 immediately went to Ground Zero and amidst the smoke, ashes, tears and despair, offered prayers
22 and succor to the injured and to the families who grieved over the loss of loved ones. The
23 Archbishop also worked tirelessly to raise funds, two million dollars altogether, to support the
24 families of Greek Orthodox victims, and to assist the families of firefighters, Port Authority
25 Personnel, and Cantor Fitzgerald employees who perished on that tragic day. Archbishop
26 Demetrios also led philanthropic responses to help the victims and their families from other
27 disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, various California mudslides, and the Tsunami in Asia in
28 2004; and

29 WHEREAS, Archbishop Demetrios has received many awards and honors in recognition
30 and honor of his exemplary service as both the leader of the American Greek Orthodox Church
31 and as a respected world religious leader and humanitarian. He was invited by the Greek
32 government to visit Greece in 2002 where he met Church and government officials, addressed the
33 Greek Parliament, and was honored by the University of Athens. In 2003, he was given the honor
34 of leading the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Vatican and met Pope John Paul

1 II. He was also awarded the highest honor of the Republic of Cyprus, the Medal of the Great
2 Cross, and in 2004, was invited by then-President George W. Bush to be a member of the
3 Presidential Delegation to the Olympic Games in Athens, Greece; and

4 WHEREAS, In 2007, in honor of his 40th Anniversary to the Episcopacy, His Eminence
5 was recognized with a special tribute at the White House by President Bush. In 2008, he also
6 received the Great Cross of the Order of the Phoenix, the highest honorary distinction of the
7 Hellenic Republic, and the Isiah Award from the American Jewish Committee. In 2015, he was
8 awarded the title of “Geron” in recognition of his “invaluable services to the Mother Church, the
9 entire Orthodoxy and the Theological Literature”; now, therefore be it

10 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
11 hereby thanks retiring Archbishop Demetrios for his many years of dedicated and devoted service
12 to the American Greek Orthodox community, and wishes him a most happy and fulfilling
13 retirement; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
15 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios.

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