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Rep. Kane’s legislation establishing a Women’s Rights History Trail program in Massachusetts passes House unanimously

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane’s (R- Shrewsbury) legislation to establish a Women’s Rights History Trail program to highlight the struggle for women’s rights in Massachusetts passed the House unanimously on Thursday, March 17th.

House Bill 4555 calls upon the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) to develop and implement a program “designating properties and sites that are historically and thematically associated with the struggle for women’s rights and women’s suffrage” while also “promoting education and awareness of the struggle for women’s rights in the commonwealth.” The bill was engrossed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 154-0 on March 17.

Representative Kane noted that this is the third time the House has approved this legislation, which she filed with former Representative Carolyn Dykema (D-Holliston) and Representative Danielle Gregoire (D-Marlborough). During the 2019-2020 legislative session, the House approved the proposal as both a stand-alone bill and as part of a larger Economic Development Bond Bill, but it was never acted on by the Senate.

An earlier version of the bill, filed during the 2017-2018 legislative session by the late Representative Gail Cariddi (D-North Adams), never reached the House floor for a vote.

According to Representative Kane, House Bill 4555 requires the Secretary of MassDOT and the Executive Director of MOTT to produce and disseminate educational materials related to the history trail. It also directs MOTT to develop vacation itineraries based on locations that are connected to the historical theme of the program, including local entertainment venues, restaurants, farms and lodging.

House Bill 4555 also establishes a 13-member task force to solicit public input and make recommendations by January 1, 2023 regarding appropriate sites, properties and attractions to include in the program, with a focus on sites that are “historically and thematically associated with the struggle for women’s rights and women’s suffrage, are geographically diverse, and commemorate individuals who reflect racial, ethnic, cultural and economic diversity.” Representative Kane said the task force will include the Secretary of MassDOT; the Executive Director of MOTT; eight legislators, including the chairs of the Joint Committee on Travel and Tourism and the chairs of the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators; the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and a representative selected by the organization; and a representative of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

“I am humbled and proud to sponsor this legislation alongside my Westborough colleagues Rep. Danielle Gregoire and former Representative Carolyn Dykema, and would like to thank Speaker Mariano, Chair Michlewitz, Chair Fiola, and my colleagues in the Women’s Caucus for their steadfast support of this legislation,” stated Representative Kane. “This legislation ensures that the many women from our Commonwealth who contributed to the fabric of our nation and democracy are recognized, and their accomplishments preserved in our state’s history, so that their legacies may serve as inspiration for future generations of young women.”

House Bill 4555 now heads to the Senate for its consideration.

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