

HOUSE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Bud L. Williams

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

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

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Bud L. Williams</i>	<i>11th Hampden</i>	<i>1/6/2025</i>

HOUSE No.

[Pin Slip]

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. 3252 OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

An Act to authorize the acquisition of land, the development and construction 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. It is hereby found and declared that presently within Western Massachusetts
2 there exists the need for a museum and cultural center with twelve thousand square feet of space
3 to be used as a center to educate the public and serve as a resource center for schools, colleges
4 and public and private agencies and organizations, and individuals regarding the historical
5 significance of this part of the Commonwealth to the success of the Underground Railroad, Civil
6 Rights Movement in America and the role of African Americans in development of the Western
7 Massachusetts region.

8 It is hereby further found and declared that the construction and development of
9 such center is needed in order to further enhance regional tourism, attract conferences and
10 conventions, and large gatherings to Springfield, thereby generating an influx of people from

11 outside the Commonwealth who would utilize the tourist facilities and related businesses in
12 every region of the Commonwealth.

13 It is hereby further found and declared that the construction and development of
14 such a center in the city of Springfield will serve as a catharsis important to alleviate some of the
15 lingering negative effects of the institution of slavery and the discrimination practiced against
16 African Americans, which had state and federal governmental statutory sanction.

17 SECTION 2. For the planning, financing, development, and construction of the
18 new center in the Commonwealth, a sum sufficient to cover the purpose herein will hereby made
19 available, for the purpose and subject to the provisions of law regulating the disbursements of
20 public funds and the approval thereof.

21 SECTION 3. The following words and phrases, as used in this act, shall, unless
22 the context otherwise requires, have the following meanings:

23 “Project,” the acquisition, development, construction, expansion, rehabilitation,
24 improvement, furnishing, equipping, or finishing, or a combination of the foregoing, or
25 operation, promotion, and maintenance, of a museum and cultural center in Springfield
26 containing twelve thousand square feet of space for exhibition, display, conference rooms and
27 related furnishings, furniture, machinery, equipment, facilities, approaches, driveways, parking
28 facilities, which shall not exceed two hundred passenger automobile spaces, roadways, public
29 transportation, planting and landscaping, the acquisition of land or other property, or rights,
30 easements, and interests acquired for or in respect of any such land or property, the demolition or
31 removal of any buildings or structures on land so acquired or in or with respect to which interests
32 are so acquired and site preparation.

33 “Mason Square,” so-called, in area within the city of Springfield shall be the site
34 for locating the center.

35 “Operator,” the person, corporation, authority, company, group or entity, whether
36 private or public, entering into contract with the Commonwealth to manage, operate and
37 maintain the new center as authorized and directed in this act.

38 SECTION 4. Within ninety days of the effective date of this act, the Department
39 of Capital Planning and Operations, hereinafter called the “commissioner,” shall conduct or
40 contract for due diligence studies, and prepare a report and preliminary specifications which shall
41 include the following:

42 Preliminary specifications for a museum and cultural center suitable for small permanent
43 displays, scale conferences, art and photographic exhibits, library, and a theatre to accommodate
44 small audiences to be built in the Mason Square Area of Springfield.

45 The preliminary specifications shall be developed and prepared in consultation
46 with the African-American Museum and Cultural Center of Western Massachusetts and the city
47 of Springfield, shall include the design, physical, and operating characteristics which the facility
48 shall contain, a precise estimate of the costs of construction, and such other details or criteria
49 relative to the construction of a building for use as a museum and cultural center.

50 (b) Certified appraisals of land to be acquired and assembled for the project,
51 including relocation of existing structures and businesses.

52 (c) Studies of area wide traffic impact, transit requirements, necessary or desirable
53 traffic changes for pedestrian and vehicular access, improvements for pedestrian safety, the

54 accommodation of on-site parking not to exceed two hundred parking spaces and costs of all of
55 the above; provided, however, that such studies may, at the direction of the Commissioner, in
56 consultation with the city of Springfield.

57 (d) Establish criteria, requirements, duties and financial responsibilities of an
58 operator to operate and maintain the center constructed pursuant to this act.