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Baptist General Convention of Illinois

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Episcopal Church (U.S.A.)

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International Council of Community
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Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago

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Chicago

Catholic Theological Union

Chicago Theological Seminary

Lutheran School of Theology

McCormick Theological Seminary

Meadville-Lombard Theological School

Chicago Center for Cultural Connections

Community Renewal Society



March 4, 2013

The Honorable John J. Cullerton
Illinois Senate President
1051 West Belmont Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657

Dear Senator Cullerton:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, an ecumenical and interreligious organization that represents the leadership of some 40 denominations in the metropolitan area.

Our concern is the matter of religious freedom for the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Greek Orthodox Church, whose faithful are located in Turkey, Greece, the Americas, Western Europe and Australia. We are asking the Illinois State Senate to adopt a resolution urging that His All-Holiness Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the worldwide leader of the Greek Orthodox Church, be granted the freedom necessary for him to provide pastoral and spiritual leadership for his people, as well as to attend to the internal governance of his church.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is a highly respected spiritual leader who is deeply engaged in matters within Orthodoxy, and also in dialogue with the Vatican, the World Council of Churches and the Church of England. He is well-known for his strong advocacy of measures to protect the environment.

We are aware that Turkey has begun to implement some small but welcome steps toward granting religious freedom to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The time is ripe for the Turkish government to expand these efforts. Therefore we respectfully ask that you and other Illinois Senators stand with the members of the Illinois House of Representatives, who in 2007 adopted a resolution related to the concerns mentioned above. Senate Resolution 70 states, "we urge the Government of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without compromise, cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, the right to train clergy of all nationalities, and to respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate."

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The full restoration of basic religious freedom and human rights for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and for Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew will benefit all Orthodox Christians and inspire oppressed religious minorities worldwide.

Thank you for your consideration of this request for the Senate's support of Senate Resolution 70.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Donald Senior, C.P.
President
Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago