

2021 -- H 5951

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF
COMMERCE

Introduced By: Representatives Shekarchi, and Blazejewski

Date Introduced: February 26, 2021

Referred To: House Municipal Government & Housing

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 42-64.19-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 42-64.19 entitled
2 "Executive Office of Commerce" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **42-64.19-3. Executive office of commerce.**

4 (a) There is hereby established within the executive branch of state government an
5 executive office of commerce effective February 1, 2015, to serve as the principal agency of the
6 executive branch of state government for managing the promotion of commerce and the economy
7 within the state and shall have the following powers and duties in accordance with the following
8 schedule:

9 (1) On or about February 1, 2015, to operate functions from the department of business
10 regulation;

11 (2) On or about April 1, 2015, to operate various divisions and functions from the
12 department of administration;

13 (3) On or before September 1, 2015, to provide to the Senate and the House of
14 Representatives a comprehensive study and review of the roles, functions, and programs of the
15 department of administration and the department of labor and training to devise recommendations
16 and a business plan for the integration of these entities with the office of the secretary of commerce.

17 The governor may include such recommendations in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget proposal; ~~and~~ and

18 (4) On or before July 1, 2021, to provide for the hiring of a deputy secretary of commerce

1 and housing, who shall report directly to the secretary of commerce. The deputy secretary of
2 commerce and housing shall:

3 (i) Be responsible for overseeing all housing initiatives in the state of Rhode Island and
4 developing a housing plan, including, but not limited to, the development of affordable housing
5 opportunities to assist in building strong community efforts and revitalizing neighborhoods;

6 (ii) Coordinate with all agencies directly related to any housing initiatives including, but
7 not limited to, the RI housing authority, coastal resources management council (CRMC), and state
8 departments including, but not limited to, the department of environmental management (DEM),
9 the department of business regulation (DBR), the department of transportation (DOT) and statewide
10 planning; and

11 (iii) Coordinate with the housing resources commission to formulate an integrated housing
12 report to include findings and recommendations to the general assembly on or before December
13 31, 2021, and annually thereafter.

14 (b) In this capacity, the office shall:

15 (1) Lead or assist state departments and coordinate business permitting processes in order
16 to:

17 (i) Improve the economy, efficiency, coordination, and quality of the business climate in
18 the state;

19 (ii) Design strategies and implement best practices that foster economic development and
20 growth of the state's economy;

21 (iii) Maximize and leverage funds from all available public and private sources, including
22 federal financial participation, grants and awards;

23 (iv) Increase public confidence by conducting customer centric operations whereby
24 commercial enterprise are supported and provided programs and services that will grow and nurture
25 the Rhode Island economy; and

26 (v) Be the state's lead agency for economic development.

27 (2) Provide oversight and coordination of all housing initiatives in the state of Rhode
28 Island.

29 (c) The office shall include the office of regulatory reform and other administration
30 functions which promote, enhance or regulate various service and functions in order to promote the
31 reform and improvement of the regulatory function of the state.

32 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF
COMMERCE

- 1 This act would create a deputy secretary of commerce and housing within the executive
- 2 office of commerce to oversee housing initiatives and develop a housing plan.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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