

2015 -- H 5336

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2015

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A N A C T

RELATING TO TAXATION - MUNICIPAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONES

Introduced By: Representatives Messier, Barros, Tobon, and Johnston

Date Introduced: February 05, 2015

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 44-18-30.C of the General Laws in Chapter 44-18 entitled "Sales  
2 and Use Taxes - Liability and Computation" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 ~~44-18-30.C. Exemption from or stabilization of sales and use taxes for municipal~~  
4 ~~economic development zones -- West Warwick. --~~ **Exemption from or stabilization of sales**  
5 **and use taxes for municipal economic development zones. --** (a) Findings. - The general  
6 assembly makes the following findings of fact:

7 (1) Various sections of several towns in the state, including, but not limited to, the town  
8 of West Warwick, are deteriorated, blighted areas which have created very difficult challenges to  
9 economic development;

10 (2) Several areas of the state are in a distressed financial condition as defined by § 45-  
11 13-12(b) and cannot finance economic development projects on its own without the participation  
12 of private enterprise;

13 (3) The general assembly has found that it is nearly impossible for private enterprise  
14 alone to meet these challenges;

15 (4) In certain sections of financially distressed communities, the serious challenges of  
16 economic development and/or redevelopment have not been met by private enterprise alone and  
17 the impact is being felt throughout the community;

18 (5) Legislation enacted to encourage redevelopment of the deteriorated, blighted areas  
19 through the formation of local redevelopment agencies has had very limited success;

1 (6) Various states, such as New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Michigan have had a great deal  
2 of success in generating economic development by exercising the authority to exempt and/or  
3 stabilize taxes;

4 (7) The state of Rhode Island has generated economic growth by redirecting and/or  
5 exempting certain commercial and retail activity from the imposition of sales, use and income  
6 taxes with recent examples being the Providence Place Mall, the Arts Districts in the cities of  
7 Providence, Pawtucket and Westerly, and financial services and aquaculture industries;

8 (8) Most recently, municipalities in our state have had great success in attracting large  
9 commercial development, including financial services, manufacturing, and major energy  
10 facilities, due in large part to the authority to exempt and/or stabilize property, tangible and/or  
11 inventory taxes;

12 (9) Attracting large non-residential developments or encouraging expansion of existing  
13 commercial entities can be extremely important to municipalities, where the quality of public  
14 education is largely dependent on the local tax base, thereby expanding the commercial tax base  
15 and reducing reliance upon the residential tax base;

16 (10) The ability to attract this development and increase the non-residential tax base, in  
17 turn, improves municipalities' ability to finance school systems, municipal services and  
18 infrastructure, thereby improving the quality of life;

19 (11) In addition to increasing the local non-residential tax base, this development creates  
20 construction jobs, permanent jobs, and spurs additional investment by private enterprises; and

21 (12) Providing authority to offer tax exemptions from, or to stabilize, the imposition of  
22 sales and use taxes will attract and assist in expanding, revitalizing and redeveloping the tax base  
23 in our municipalities, thereby providing long-term economic benefits and development.

24 (b) Exemption or stabilization of sales and use taxes imposed on sales from businesses  
25 located in a municipal economic development zone.

26 (1) In order to ~~attract new construction and development~~ promote revitalization in a  
27 municipal economic development zone (MED) as provided in this section, upon the designation  
28 of such a zone as set forth in subsection (c) of this section, all businesses engaging in qualifying  
29 sales and located ~~in new construction~~ in a MED zone (a MED zone business) shall be exempt  
30 from the requirement to charge and collect fifty percent (50%) of the current sales and use tax  
31 pursuant to §§ 44-18-18 and 44-18-20 for a period of ten (10) years. Sales and use taxes collected  
32 in a MED zone shall be returned to the same MED zone in accordance with the provisions of this  
33 section. The ten (10) year exemption period for all MED zone businesses shall begin to run from  
34 the latest to occur of: (i) the date that is three (3) years from the effective date of the January

1 session 2003 amendments [July 17, 2003] or (ii) the date that is two (2) years from the date upon  
2 which the city or town council designates the MED zone for its municipality; or (iii) the date the  
3 first MED zone business obtains a certification of exemption as set forth in subdivision (c)(6) of  
4 this section.

5 (2) For purposes of this section, "qualifying sales" for a MED zone business shall not  
6 include gambling activities, or the retail sales of motor vehicles, furniture, home furnishings  
7 including mattresses and oriental rugs, tobacco products, or packaged alcoholic beverages.

8 (3) "Qualifying sales" shall be sales at which the point of sale is located within the same  
9 MED zone and point of delivery is located within the same MED zone.

10 (c) Creation of the municipal economic development zone.

11 (1) The city or town council of a financially distressed community may designate in  
12 accordance with the provisions of this section one MED zone in the municipality, provided that  
13 the municipality is:

14 (i) A financially distressed community as defined by § 45-13-12(b), using the criteria set  
15 forth in § 45-13-12(b)(1) through (4);

16 (ii) ~~Has a population less than fifty thousand (50,000) persons; and~~ [The MED zone shall](#)  
17 [be located in a municipality designated and state-approved "growth center" in accordance with](#)  
18 [the Land-Use 2025 element of the state guide plan.](#)

19 (iii) The MED zone shall be a parcel of or contiguous parcels of land consisting in total  
20 of not less than ten (10) acres, but not more than thirty (30) acres in the area served by adequate  
21 utilities and transportation facilities.

22 (2) The city or town council of any financially distressed city or town, as set forth in  
23 subdivision (1) of this subsection, in creating a MED zone, shall have the power and authority of  
24 a redevelopment agency, as provided in chapter 32 of title 45, to undertake the redevelopment of  
25 a MED zone.

26 (3) The city or town council, in designating a MED zone, shall after public notice,  
27 hearing and vote as provided by § 45-32-4, comply with the plan requirements of § 45-32-8 and  
28 shall be responsible for carrying on the plan. The city or town council in implementing the MED  
29 zone plan shall have the power of eminent domain as set forth in § 45-32-24, and the provisions  
30 of §§ 45-32-25 -- 45-32-41 shall apply to all such condemnations.

31 (4) All sales and use taxes collected within a MED zone shall be reimbursed to the  
32 municipality in which the MED zone is located, and may be expended by the municipality to  
33 implement the capital improvement component of the MED zone plan for MED zone property or  
34 for property located within one mile of the MED zone or for such other capital improvements as

1 the municipality may determine are required to mitigate MED zone impacts.

2 (5) West Warwick. - The following area or portions of them of the town of West  
3 Warwick may be designated as the town's municipal economic development zone by the town  
4 council of the town of West Warwick after public notice, hearing and vote as provided in § 45-  
5 32-4:

6 The area bounded generally by the East Coast Bike Path in the east, Archambault and  
7 Gardner Avenue in the north, Payan Street to Curson Street, Curson Street to McNiff, McNiff to  
8 Barnes Street, Barnes Street to Nowicki Street to East Street, East Street to Blanchard Street,  
9 Blanchard Street to West Street in the west, West Street to Washington Street, Washington Street  
10 to Nolan Street, Nolan Street to the East Coast Bike Path in the south, all as more particularly  
11 described on the West Warwick municipal economic development zone map on file with the town  
12 clerk.

13 (6) The tax administrator shall issue a certification of exemption to the MED zone  
14 business at the time the business ~~applies for its permit to make sales at retail and~~ provides the tax  
15 administrator with a MED zone business certificate issued by the town clerk stating that the  
16 business is located ~~in new construction~~ in the MED zone. The duration of the certificate shall be  
17 determined in accordance with subdivision (b)(1) of this section.

18 (7) No business shall be permitted to become a MED zone business or to receive a  
19 certificate of exemption pursuant to subdivision (6) of this subsection by relocating from any area  
20 within the state of Rhode Island but outside the MED zone to new construction within the MED  
21 zone, unless the relocation results in the creation of new permanent employment positions that  
22 increase the total employment of the business by not less than fifty percent (50%) of its average  
23 total employment for the two (2) year period immediately preceding the year in which it applies  
24 for its certificate of exemption. Any business that expands its operations by adding a new location  
25 within the MED zone and then ceases to operate any of its locations within the state of Rhode  
26 Island that existed prior to the establishment of the MED zone location shall immediately have its  
27 certificate of exemption for the MED zone location revoked.

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

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO TAXATION - MUNICIPAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONES

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- 1           This act would expand the West Warwick municipal economic zone to the entire state in
- 2 all municipally designated and state approved "growth centers" as defined by the Land-Use 2025
- 3 element of the state guide plan.
- 4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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