

2023 -- H 5930

LC001733

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND  
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Introduced By: Representative Joseph J. Solomon

Date Introduced: March 01, 2023

Referred To: House Labor

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 28-5.1-3.2, 28-5.1-10 and 28-5.1-17 of the General Laws in Chapter  
2 28-5.1 entitled "Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action" are hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **28-5.1-3.2. Enforcement.**

4 (a) The state equal opportunity administrator is authorized to initiate complaints against  
5 any agencies, administrators, or employees of any department or division within state government,  
6 excluding the legislative branch, who or that willfully fail to comply with the requirements of any  
7 applicable affirmative action plan or of this chapter or who or that fail to meet the standards of good  
8 faith effort, reasonable basis, or reasonable action, as defined in guidelines promulgated by the  
9 federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as set forth in 29 C.F.R. Part 1607 [and Office](#)  
10 [of Federal Contract Compliance Programs as set forth in 41 CFR Part 60-741.](#)

11 (b) Whenever the equal employment opportunity administrator initiates a complaint, he or  
12 she shall cause to be issued and served in the name of the equal employment opportunity office a  
13 written notice, together with a copy of the complaint, requiring that the agency, administrator,  
14 agent, or employee respond and appear at a hearing at a time and place specified in the notice. The  
15 equal employment opportunity office shall follow its lawfully adopted rules and regulations  
16 concerning hearings of discrimination complaints.

17 (c) The equal employment opportunity office shall have the power, after a hearing, to issue  
18 an order requiring a respondent to a complaint to cease and desist from any unlawful discriminatory

1 practice and/or to take any affirmative action, including, but not limited to, hiring, reinstatement,  
2 transfer, or upgrading employees, with or without back pay, or dismissal, that may be necessary to  
3 secure compliance with any applicable affirmative action plan or with state or federal law.

4 (d) A final order of the equal employment opportunity office constitutes an “order” within  
5 the meaning of § 42-35-1; is enforceable as an order; is to be rendered in accordance with § 42-35-  
6 12; and is subject to judicial review in accordance with § 42-35-15.

7 **28-5.1-10. State contracts.**

8 The division of purchases shall prepare any rules, regulations, and compliance reports that  
9 shall require of state contractors the same commitment to equal opportunity as prevails under  
10 federal contracts controlled by federal executive orders 11246, 11625 and 11375 [and Office of](#)  
11 [Federal Contract Compliance Programs as set forth in 41 CFR Part 60-741](#). Affirmative action  
12 plans prepared pursuant to those rules and regulations shall be reviewed by the state equal  
13 opportunity office. The state equal opportunity office shall prepare a comprehensive plan to provide  
14 compliance reviews for state contracts. A contractor’s failure to abide by the rules, regulations,  
15 contract terms, and compliance reporting provisions as established shall be ground for forfeitures  
16 and penalties as established by the department of administration in consultation with the state equal  
17 opportunity office.

18 **28-5.1-17. Utilization analysis.**

19 (a)(1) The personnel administrator, in consultation with the equal employment opportunity  
20 administrator, and the human resources outreach and diversity administrator within the department  
21 of administration, shall annually conduct a utilization analysis of positions within state government  
22 based upon the annual review conducted pursuant to §§ [28-5-40](#), 28-5.1-3 and 28-5.1-4.

23 (2)(i) To the extent the analysis determines that minorities as currently defined in federal  
24 employment law as Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians (including Alaskan natives), Asians  
25 (including Pacific Islanders), are being underrepresented and/or underutilized, the personnel  
26 administrator shall, through the director of administration, direct the head of the department where  
27 the under-representation and/or under-utilization exists to establish precise goals and timetables  
28 and assist in the correction of each deficiency, to the extent permitted by law and by collective  
29 bargaining agreements.

30 [\(ii\) To the extent the analysis determines that persons with disabilities as defined by Office](#)  
31 [of Federal Contract Compliance Programs as set forth in 41 CFR Part 60-741 are being](#)  
32 [underrepresented and/or underutilized, the personnel administrator shall, through the director of](#)  
33 [administration, direct the head of the department where the under-representation and/or under-](#)  
34 [utilization exists to establish precise goals and timetables and assist in the correction of each](#)

1 [deficiency, to the extent permitted by law and by collective bargaining agreements.](#)

2 (3) The initial analysis shall be directed toward service-oriented departments of the state,  
3 state police, labor and training, corrections, children, youth and families, courts, transportation, and  
4 human services.

5 (4) The equal employment opportunity administrator shall be consulted in the selection  
6 process for all positions certified as underrepresented and/or underutilized and shall report the  
7 results of progress toward goals to the governor and to the general assembly by January 31 and July  
8 31 of each year. A copy of these results which shall be referred to the Rhode Island commission  
9 for human rights which may, in its discretion, investigate whether a violation of chapter 5 of this  
10 title has occurred. The results shall be a public record and shall be made available electronically on  
11 the secretary of state's website.

12 (b)(1) In the event of a reduction in force, the personnel administrator, in consultation with  
13 the equal employment opportunity administrator and director of the department(s) where the  
14 reduction is proposed, shall develop a plan to ensure that affirmation action gains are preserved to  
15 the extent permitted by law and by collective bargaining agreements. A copy of this plan shall be  
16 referred to the Rhode Island commission for human rights which may, in its discretion, investigate  
17 whether a violation of chapter 5 of this title has occurred. The plan shall be a public record and  
18 shall be made available electronically on the secretary of state's website.

19 (2) The equal employment opportunity administrator shall report the results of the plans  
20 and their subsequent actions to the governor and to the general assembly by January 31 and July  
21 31 of each year, to the Rhode Island commission for human rights. The report shall be a public  
22 record and shall be made available electronically on the secretary of state's website. Consistent  
23 with § 28-5.1-6, the Rhode Island commission for human rights shall have the power to order  
24 discontinuance of any department or division employment pattern or practice deemed  
25 discriminatory in intent or result by the commission.

26 (3) The equal opportunity administrator shall notify the commission of reports and results  
27 under this chapter.

28 SECTION 2. The title of Chapter 37-2.2 of the General Laws entitled "Disability Business  
29 Enterprises" is hereby amended to read as follows:

30 ~~CHAPTER 37-2.2~~

31 ~~Disability Business Enterprises~~

32 [CHAPTER 37-2.2](#)

33 [DISABILITY OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES](#)

34 SECTION 3. Sections 37-2.2-2 and 37-2.2-3.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 37-2.2

1 entitled "Disability Business Enterprises" are hereby amended to read as follows:

2 **37-2.2-2. Definitions.**

3 As used in this chapter, the following words and phrases shall have the following meanings  
4 unless the context shall indicate another or different meaning or intent:

5 (1) "Disability owned businesses" means a business owned and controlled by persons with  
6 disabilities, which at least fifty-one percent (51%) owned by one or more person(s) with disabilities  
7 or, in the case of a publicly owned business, at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the stock of which  
8 is owned by one or more disabled person, whose management and daily business operations are  
9 controlled by one or more person(s) with disabilities, and have fifty (50) or fewer employees.

10 (2) "Persons with disabilities" or "person with a disability" shall mean any individual who  
11 has a physical or mental impairment which constitutes a substantial barrier to employment as  
12 certified by the department of human services, ~~or~~ the department of behavioral healthcare,  
13 developmental disabilities and hospitals, U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, Social Security  
14 Administration, or other certifying state or federal entity.

15 ~~(2) "Small disadvantaged businesses owned and controlled by persons with disabilities"~~  
16 ~~shall mean small business concern, which is at least fifty one percent (51%) owned by one or more~~  
17 ~~person(s) with disabilities or, in the case of a publicly owned business, at least fifty one percent~~  
18 ~~(51%) of the stock of which is owned by one or more disabled person, whose management and~~  
19 ~~daily business operations are controlled by one or more person(s) with disabilities, and have fifty~~  
20 ~~or fewer employees.~~

21 (3) "A physical or mental impairment" shall mean any physiological disorder or condition,  
22 cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems:  
23 neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs;  
24 cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine;  
25 or any mental psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome,  
26 emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

27 **37-2.2-3.1. Policy and applicability.**

28 (a) It is the policy of the state of Rhode Island that ~~small disadvantaged~~ disability owned  
29 businesses shall have the maximum opportunity to participate in the performance of procurements  
30 and projects as outlined in this chapter. This chapter shall apply to any and all state purchasing,  
31 including, but not limited to, the procurement of goods and services, construction projects, or  
32 contracts funded in whole or in part by state funds, or funds which, in accordance with a federal  
33 grant or otherwise, the state expends or administers or in which the state is a signatory to the  
34 construction contract.

1 (b) The director of administration, in consultation with the governor's commission on  
2 disabilities, is authorized and directed to establish rules and regulation formulas for awarding  
3 contracts to ~~small disadvantaged~~ disability owned businesses ~~owned and controlled by persons with~~  
4 ~~disabilities~~ in the procurement of goods, services, construction projects, or contracts funded in  
5 whole or in part by state funds, in accordance with § 37-2-9(b)(14) on or before January 1, 2013.

6 (c) The state's annual goal for disability owned business enterprises to participate in state  
7 procurements and construction projects under this chapter shall be no less than three percent (3%)  
8 of the total value of all contracts available to businesses in each fiscal year. The director of the  
9 department of administration is further authorized to establish by rules and regulation formulas for  
10 giving disability business enterprises a preference in contract and subcontract awards.

11 SECTION 4. Chapter 37-2.2 of the General Laws entitled "Disability Business Enterprises"  
12 is hereby amended by adding thereto the following sections:

13 **37-2.2-6. Sanctions.**

14 The director of the department of administration shall have the power to impose sanctions  
15 upon contractors not in compliance with this chapter and the rules and regulations promulgated to  
16 implement the provisions of this chapter. The sanctions may include, but not be limited to:

17 (1) Suspension of payments;

18 (2) Termination of the contract;

19 (3) Recovery by the state of ten percent (10%) of the contract award price as presumed  
20 damages; or

21 (4) Denial of right to participate in future projects for up to three (3) years.

22 **37-2.2-7. Reporting.**

23 By August 1, 2024, and each August 1 thereafter, the department of administration shall  
24 submit an annual report to the governor, speaker of the house, senate president, and executive  
25 secretary of the governor's commission on disabilities for the period from July 1 to June 30 on the  
26 actual utilization of disability-owned business enterprises as contractors, subcontractors, suppliers,  
27 and professional service providers for the state. The annual report shall include a list of all  
28 disability-owned small businesses that participated as contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and  
29 professional service providers for the state during the previous fiscal year.

30 SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
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1           This act would incorporate the federal affirmative action and nondiscrimination obligations  
2 of federal contractors and subcontractors regarding individuals with disabilities, utilization goal of  
3 seven percent (7%) for employment of qualified individuals with disabilities into the Rhode Island  
4 equal opportunity and affirmative action policy. This act would further expand the existing  
5 disability business enterprises program by allowing Veterans' Affairs, the Social Security  
6 Administration and others to verify that a business owner has a disability and is eligible for the  
7 current program. This article would set a goal of no less than three percent (3%) for state  
8 procurement by June 30, 2024.

9           This act would take effect upon passage.

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