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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO WATERS AND NAVIGATION -- ACT ON COASTS - COASTAL  
RESILIENCY

Introduced By: Representatives Spears, Cortvriend, Kislak, Kazarian, Casimiro, Carson,  
Cotter, Speakman, Ajello, and Dawson

Date Introduced: January 05, 2024

Referred To: House Environment and Natural Resources

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 46 of the General Laws entitled "WATERS AND NAVIGATION" is  
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 23.4

4 ACT ON COASTS - COASTAL RESILIENCY

5 **46-23.4-1. Short title.**

6 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Act on Coasts – Coastal Resiliency".

7 **46-23.4-2. Rhode Island chief resilience officer (CRO) – Executive Order.**

8 (a) The chief resilience officer (CRO) shall:

9 (1) Develop a statewide resilience plan with the EC4 to improve coordination among state  
10 agencies and local jurisdictions to support community and economic recovery efforts and to address  
11 risk and vulnerability reduction from sea rise, riverine flooding and urban heat and shall provide  
12 the plan to the governor, the EC4 and the general assembly by June 30, 2025, to be included in the  
13 state climate plan as outlined in chapter 6.2 of title 42 ("2021 act on climate") which statewide plan  
14 is due December 31, 2025;

15 (i) It shall be based on existing data and the best available science regarding the current  
16 and anticipated environmental effects of climate change in Rhode Island, including, but not limited  
17 to, increased temperatures, sea level rise, increased frequency or severity of rainfall, storms and  
18 flooding, increased forest fires, and increased frequency and severity of droughts, anticipated by

1 scientists at least through 2050, working in concert with the goals outlined in chapter 6.2 of title 42  
2 ("2021 act on climate");

3 (i) The state resiliency office (the "office") shall develop, implement, and maintain the  
4 state resilience plan and shall coordinate resilience and disaster recovery efforts, including  
5 coordination with federal, state, and local governmental agencies, stakeholders, and  
6 nongovernmental entities. The office shall coordinate and strengthen efforts to reduce losses from  
7 future disasters across the state and shall develop, implement, and maintain a strategic statewide  
8 resilience plan;

9 (2) The office shall consult with the governor's office, the Rhode Island emergency  
10 management agency (RIEMA), the department of health (DOH), the department of environmental  
11 management (DEM), the coastal resources management council (CRMC), Rhode Island  
12 Infrastructure bank and all other affected state agencies in developing the state resilience plan;

13 (3) In developing the program, the CRO shall ensure a participatory process that includes  
14 local government, state agencies, business, labor, industry, agriculture, civic and volunteer  
15 organizations, academia, community leaders, and other stakeholders;

16 (4) Provide technical assistance to municipalities for the implementation of resilience  
17 planning, including resilience frameworks, vulnerability profiles, risk-reduction plans, and  
18 economic development strategies;

19 (5) Provide technical assistance to state agencies for the implementation of resilience  
20 policies and procedures and to institutionalize resilience practices across departments and agencies;

21 (6) Provide technical assistance to local governments and state agencies to secure  
22 additional resources and investment to implement resilience solutions;

23 (7) Integrate resilience criteria into existing competitive grant programs;

24 (8) Develop metrics and targets to measure the short- and long-term success of resilience  
25 efforts and actions;

26 (9) Support RIEMA in long-term community recovery efforts and resource navigation after  
27 a disaster;

28 (10) Provide strategic direction and support to the EC4 and other cross-departmental  
29 climate change resilience initiatives;

30 (11) Facilitate on-going stakeholder engagement, particularly the Rhode Island business  
31 community, realtors, engineers, municipalities, academia, environmental justice communities, state  
32 and local emergency response teams and the health care delivery systems and input into  
33 recommendations; and

34 (12) Undertake any and all other duties assigned to the CRO by the governor, DEM and

1 the EC4.

2 (c) The CRO will provide support to agencies as they identify and incorporate projections  
3 related to coastal change provided by the state resilience plan into their strategic plans.

4 **46-23.4-3. Coastal resilience plan.**

5 (a) The statewide climate change resilience strategy shall include a state coastal resilience  
6 plan that recommends a specific long-term and short-term strategy for climate change resilience  
7 and adaptation in the coastal areas of the state, i.e., tidal and non-tidal waters, waterfronts, and  
8 inland areas along the coast. The coastal resilience plan shall include, at a minimum:

9 (1) An assessment of the vulnerabilities of communities located within the coastal areas to  
10 climate change effects such as rising sea levels, increased flooding, and tidal and storm surge  
11 flooding anticipated by the year 2050, including physical, economic, and social vulnerabilities;

12 (2) A description of the investments that the state, along with the federal government, local  
13 governments, and other organizations, have already made or committed to make in building the  
14 resilience of coastal communities, including hard and nature-based resistance structures, planning  
15 guidance and assistance, and other resilience and adaptation measures;

16 (3) Recommended methodologies for decision-making for further investment of state or  
17 federal funds in constructing additional hard or nature-based resilience structures to prevent or  
18 mitigate impacts of climate change, or in adopting other resilience or adaptation strategies;

19 (4) Recommendations for actions to be taken by the state to prepare coastal communities  
20 to plan, mitigate, and adapt to the anticipated impacts of climate change including, but not limited  
21 to, stormwater drainage, hard infrastructure, nature based solutions, relocation and retreat  
22 strategies; and

23 (5) Recommendations for financing strategies to fund the recommended resilience and  
24 adaptation measures.

25 (b) The statewide climate change resilience plan shall be updated as necessary and shall be  
26 reviewed at least every two (2) years by the chief resilience officer, with the support of the  
27 interagency council, to ensure consistency with the scientific report on climate change and with  
28 evolving scientific information.

29 SECTION 2. Chapter 42-6.2 of the General Laws entitled "2021 Act on Climate" is hereby  
30 amended by adding thereto the following section:

31 **42-6.2-4.1. Advisory board on resilience for ocean and riverine coasts.**

32 (a) The advisory board on resilience for ocean and riverine coasts is hereby established.  
33 The advisory board shall have fourteen (14) members. Six (6) members shall be appointed by the  
34 governor; two (2) of whom shall be representatives of city or town government. Four (4) members

1 shall be appointed by the president of the senate, who shall give due consideration to appointing  
2 persons with expertise in insurance; flood management and mitigation; and infrastructure. Four (4)  
3 members shall be appointed by the speaker of the house, who shall give due consideration to  
4 appointing persons with expertise in land use planning; environmental organization; riverine  
5 geology; and real estate.

6 (b) The members of the advisory board shall be appointed for terms of three (3) years;  
7 provided, however, that, with regard to the initial appointments, four (4) members shall be  
8 appointed for a term of one year; five (5) members shall be appointed for a term of two (2) years;  
9 and five (5) members shall be appointed for a term of three (3) years. Members may be reappointed,  
10 and their appointments shall continue until their successors are appointed. The term of a member  
11 representing a city or town shall end when the member no longer holds an elected or appointed  
12 position in the city or town they were representing. A vacancy other than by expiration shall be  
13 filled in the manner of the original appointment, but only for the unexpired portion of the term.

14 (c) The members of the advisory board shall receive no compensation.

15 (d) The governor shall appoint a chairperson. A vice-chairperson and secretary shall be  
16 elected annually by the advisory board members. All officers of the advisory board shall serve until  
17 their successors have been duly appointed or elected.

18 (e) The advisory board shall meet at least quarterly or at the call of the chairperson of the  
19 EC4 council. The chairperson of the council, or designee, shall be present for all advisory board  
20 meetings.

21 (f) The advisory board shall have the following purposes and duties:

22 (1) Advise the EC4 on all matters including plans, programs, strategies and make  
23 recommendations for adaptation on resilience in urban, coastal and riverine environments, and sea  
24 rise environments;

25 (2) Assist the EC4 in improving public access to the best available scientific, technical and  
26 other information regarding coastal, riverine, and urban resilience;

27 (3) Serve as a conduit for communicating information from the EC4 to communities and  
28 constituencies as well as input from the community level to the EC4; and

29 (4) No later than June 30, 2025, the EC4 along with the state resilience office shall prepare  
30 a state coastal and resilience plan for submission to the governor. The plan shall also be utilized by  
31 the EC4 for inclusion in the climate plan described in § 42-6.2-2(a)(2)(i).

32 SECTION 3. 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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RESILIENCY

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1           This act would require the chief resilience officer (CRO) and a resiliency office within the  
2 department of environmental management (DEM) be charged with the creation, maintenance and  
3 updating of the state's resiliency and community recovery program. The act would also create a  
4 statewide climate change resilience strategy for climate change as well as a fourteen (14) member  
5 advisory board on resilience for ocean and riverine coasts.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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