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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND HOUSING
AND RESOURCES ACT OF 1998

Introduced By: Representatives Spears, Cotter, Craven, Finkelman, Dawson, Kazarian,
Casimiro, Slater, Cortvriend, and O'Brien
Date Introduced: January 05, 2024

Referred To: House Municipal Government & Housing

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Chapter 42-128 of the General Laws entitled "Rhode Island Housing and
2 Resources Act of 1998" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:
- 3 **42-128-18. Universal design principals.**
- 4 (a) Effective January 1, 2025, in addition to any current accessibility requirements for low-
5 and moderate-income housing, as contained 24 CFR Part 100, in Subpart D, all new construction
6 for low- and moderate-income housing pursuant to this chapter shall be constructed using the
7 universal design principals contained in this section.
- 8 (b) Universal design principals required by this section shall include, but not be limited to:
- 9 (1) Uniform accessibility. All low- and moderate-income housing units shall be accessible
10 to individuals with disabilities who may require the use of a wheelchair and the units shall include:
- 11 (A) Ramps;
- 12 (B) Elevators when necessary;
- 13 (C) Wheelchair accessible entrances and exits throughout the housing unit; and
- 14 (D) Signage appropriate to help individuals with disabilities navigate movement
15 throughout the housing unit.
- 16 (2) Inclusivity. Incorporate spaces within the housing unit that provide for the needs of
17 persons with sensory, cognitive, or mobility impairments, children, senior citizens, and other
18 vulnerable populations.

1 (3) Adaptability. Incorporate spaces within the housing unit that can be easily modified or
2 adapted to meet changing needs which shall include, but not be limited to, flexible room layouts
3 and adjustable fixtures.

4 (4) Safety. Incorporate safety features within the housing unit including, but not limited to,
5 handrails, non-slip surfaces, and emergency exits.

6 (5) Wayfinding. Incorporate wayfinding systems within the housing unit building to assist
7 individuals in navigating buildings independently.

8 (c) Compliance and enforcement approval:

9 (1) Developers shall submit project plans and construction proposals that clearly
10 demonstrate compliance with universal design principles to the relevant local building authorities
11 for approval.

12 (2) Local building authorities shall be responsible for reviewing and approving
13 construction plans based on their adherence to universal design principles.

14 (3) Developers found to be in violation of this section may be subject to penalties, fines or
15 other appropriate enforcement actions as determined by state or local authorities.

16 (d) The Rhode Island housing resources agency:

17 (1) Shall develop and implement public awareness campaigns and educational programs to
18 promote the understanding and adoption of universal design principles within the state.

19 (2) Promulgate rules and regulation to implement the provisions of this section.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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- 1 This act would incorporate universal design principals into new construction of low- and
- 2 moderate-income housing to provide greater accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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