

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
Executive Department
GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES
John O. Pastore Center, 2 Cherry Dale Court
Cranston, RI 02920-3049
[voice] (401) 462-0110 [tty] via RI Relay 711 [fax] 462-0106
[e-mail] bob.cooper@gcd.ri.gov [website] www.disabilities.ri.gov

Legislative Impact Statement

To: Chairperson Stephen M. Casey
House Municipal Government & Housing Committee

From: Elisabeth Hubbard, Executive Secretary
**24 House 7377 AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT --
STATE BUILDING CODE -- RHODE ISLAND INCLUSIVE HOME DESIGN ACT**
Thursday, March 7, 2024

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities' Legislation Committee has developed a Legislative Impact Statement on the bill listed below. The Commission would be pleased to present testimony to the committee. Please contact me (462-0102) if testimony is desired or for additional information.

Introduced By Representative Stewart

Establishes the Rhode Island Inclusive Home Design Act as a new article in the state building code.

Legislation Committee finds this bill Beneficial.

The Commission is supportive of efforts to increase accessibility in our community. This bill aims to do so by adding requirements for accessibility for new construction from the American National Standards Institute (commonly known as "ANSI") Standards for Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities. These standards are Type C, visitable units, which require a lower standard than "accessible" (Type A) or "adaptable" (Type B). The intention of type C units is that an individual with a disability could enter the dwelling until and be able to circulate around at least one floor. For some features, such as restrooms and food preparations areas, there are requirements for clearance and space to maneuver a wheelchair.

The benefits of these standards for people with disabilities is twofold. First, it allows people with disabilities to visit family and friends in their home. Very often, people with mobility impairments are unable to visit the homes of loved ones because they are inaccessible. Social isolation is a continuing problem for people with disabilities, which can create poor physical health outcomes as well. This bill would allow people with disabilities to socialize more.

Secondly, this would increase the amount of housing that is available that can be converted to an accessible unit. While the units would not be constructed as accessible, there will be a foundation that can easily be converted. This will significantly decrease the constructions cost to make a unit accessible. This is particularly beneficial to older individuals who want to continue to reside in their own home after developing a mobility impairment.

We do have some concerns about the impact that these requirements will have on new housing construction. We hope that implementation of the law will be done in a manner as to prevent any negative impact on the availability of housing overall in Rhode Island.

cc: Representative Stewart
Rico Vota, Governor's Office of Legislative Affairs