

LC003617

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026**

## RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW EFFICIENCY ACT

Date Introduced: February 06, 2026

Referred To: House Municipal Government & Housing

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Title 45 of the General Laws entitled "TOWNS AND CITIES" is hereby  
2   amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

## CHAPTER 22.5

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW EFFICIENCY ACT

**45-22.5-1. Short title.**

This act shall be known and may be cited as “The Development Review Efficiency Act.”

**45-22.5-2. Purpose.**

8           The purpose of this chapter is to facilitate speedier and more efficient development while  
9           ensuring public safety, by authorizing licensed or certified third parties to certify documents and  
10          inspect buildings in compliance with applicable building and other codes.

**45-22.5-3. Definitions.**

For the purposes of this section:

(1) “Development document” means a document, to include a building plan, site plan, or an application for a building permit, relating to improvements to land required by state or local law or regulation or by a regulatory authority to initiate, engage in, or complete an improvement, but does not include applications or documents for zoning or planning approvals.

17           (2) “Building inspection” means the inspection of an improvement to land required by a  
18           regulatory authority as part of a project to develop or improve real estate pursuant to the provisions

1 of § 23-27.3-111.2.

2 (3) “Building permit” means a permit required by a regulatory authority to construct or  
3 improve or complete an improvement to real estate as required pursuant to § 23-27.3-113.1.

4 (4) “Independent provider” means a person licensed or certified as a building code  
5 administrator, engineer, or architect.

6 (5) “Regulatory authority” means a department, board, commission, or other entity of the  
7 State of Rhode Island or of the political subdivision responsible for processing or approving  
8 development documents and building permits or conducting building inspections.

9 **45-22.5-4. Allowance for use of independent providers.**

10 (a) Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation, the fee owner of land or a building or  
11 structure, or the fee owner’s contractor upon written authorization from the fee owner, may contract  
12 with an independent provider to review development documents or provide building inspections  
13 with regard to the land, building, or structure, and may make payment directly to the independent  
14 provider for the provision of the services.

15 (b) The fee owner or fee owner’s contractor shall not have an ownership stake in the  
16 independent provider, and the independent provider shall not provide legal counsel to the fee owner  
17 or fee owner’s contractor.

18 (c) If a fee owner or contractor retains an independent provider for the purposes of  
19 reviewing development documents or providing building inspections, the regulatory authority shall  
20 reduce the fee charged for the services by the amount of cost savings realized by the regulatory  
21 authority.

22 (d)(1) An independent provider shall only review development documents or provide  
23 building inspections if the independent provider maintains insurance for professional liability  
24 covering all services performed as an independent provider, unless the regulatory authority waives  
25 or modifies the insurance requirement of subsection (d)(2) of this section.

26 (2) Unless waived or modified by the regulatory authority, the independent provider shall  
27 maintain minimum policy limits of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence and two million  
28 dollars (\$2,000,000) in the aggregate for any project with a construction cost of five million dollars  
29 (\$5,000,000) or less and two million dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence and four million dollars  
30 (\$4,000,000) in the aggregate for any project with a construction cost of over five million dollars  
31 (\$5,000,000).

32 (e) Before any development document reviews or building inspections are performed, the  
33 fee owner or the fee owner’s contractor shall provide to the regulatory authority:

34 (1) The name, firm, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of each independent

1 provider who is performing, or will perform, such services, his or her professional license or  
2 certification number, qualification statements or résumés, and, unless the regulatory authority  
3 waives insurance coverage, a certificate of insurance demonstrating that professional liability-  
4 insurance coverage is in place for the independent provider's firm in the amounts required by  
5 subsection (b)(2) of this section and the list of any lots or structures that the independent provider  
6 assist on, along with the scheduled dates.

7 (2) The following acknowledgment:

8 "By executing this form, I acknowledge that I have made inquiry regarding the competence  
9 of the licensed or certified independent provider and the level of his/her insurance and am satisfied  
10 that my interests are adequately protected. I agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless any  
11 regulatory authority from any and all claims arising from my use of these licensed or certified  
12 personnel to provide development documents reviews and building inspections with respect to the  
13 building or structure that is the subject of the enclosed application."

14 (f) If an owner or an owner's contractor contracts with an independent provider to review  
15 development documents or provide building inspections, the regulatory authority shall provide  
16 equal access to all permitting and inspection documents and reports to the independent provider,  
17 owner, or contractor that would be provided to regulatory authority personnel in completing  
18 development documents or building inspections.

19 (g) If such access is normally provided by software that protects exempt records from  
20 disclosure, the regulatory authority shall provide requested permitting or inspection documents and  
21 reports to the independent provider, owner, or contractor within two (2) business days of a request  
22 in electronic format.

23 **45-22.5-5. Qualifications and requirements for independent providers for building**  
24 **inspections.**

25 (a) An independent provider may only provide building inspections that are within the  
26 disciplines covered by that person's licensure or;

27 (b) Each regulatory authority may audit the performance of independent providers  
28 operating within their jurisdiction and demand the owner or owner's contractor to be present during  
29 the times of requested building inspections by the independent provider, although the fact or  
30 findings of the audit shall not be given to the independent provider.

31 (1) Audits may be conducted only after the regulatory authority has created a formal audit  
32 evaluation. The regulatory authority may, upon clear and convincing evidence, decide that an  
33 independent provider has been negligent in providing building inspections and suspend the  
34 independent provider for not more than one year.

1           (2) An independent provider may be audited no more than four (4) times in a month, unless  
2 the regulatory authority determines that the condition of a building constitutes an immediate threat  
3 to public safety and welfare.

4           (3) Work may not be delayed for the completion of an audit by the regulatory authority.

5           (c) If an independent provider is providing building inspections, upon completion of all  
6 required inspections, the independent provider shall submit to the regulatory authority a certificate  
7 of compliance summarizing the inspections performed in accordance with the approved plans and  
8 applicable codes.

9           (d) No more than seven (7) business days, or, if the independent provider is inspecting  
10 single-family or two (2) family dwellings, no more than three (3) business days, after the receipt of  
11 the certificate of compliance with all necessary inspections, and after the payment of all outstanding  
12 required fees, a certificate of occupancy or completion shall be issued by the regulatory authority,  
13 or the regulatory authority shall provide a notice to the independent provider of any specific  
14 deficiencies in the certificate of compliance, with reference to specific code chapters and if the  
15 regulatory authority does not issue the certificate of occupancy or completion or provide notice  
16 within the required number of days, the certificate of occupancy or completion is considered  
17 granted as a matter of law and shall be issued the next business day.

18           (e) Notwithstanding any provision of this section, any decisions regarding a building  
19 inspection, certificate of occupancy, completion, or the suspension of an independent provider by  
20 a regulatory authority after an audit, may be appealed to the Rhode Island building code standards  
21 commission, which shall adjudicate the dispute.

22           **45-22.5-6. Requirements for reviews of development documents and permits.**

23           (a) An independent provider performing reviews of development documents under this  
24 chapter shall review them to determine compliance with the provisions of this chapter. Upon  
25 determining compliance, the independent provider shall prepare an affidavit or affidavits certifying  
26 that the documents were reviewed pursuant to this chapter, that the documents meet all applicable  
27 codes, and that he or she holds the appropriate license or certificate. The affidavit should be  
28 submitted to the regulatory authority.

29           (b) No more than ten (10) business days after receipt of a development document or  
30 application for a building permit, the regulatory authority shall approve such document or provide  
31 a written notice to the applicant identifying the specific features that do not comply with the  
32 applicable codes, as well as the specific code chapters. If no written notice of the document or  
33 permit deficiencies is provided within the ten (10) business days, the document or permit shall be  
34 deemed approved as a matter of law, and any necessary permit or permits shall be issued by the

1 regulatory authority on the next business day.

2 (c) If the applicant submits revisions, the regulatory authority has the remainder of the  
3 tolled ten (10) business days plus one business day from the date of resubmittal to approve the  
4 development documents, issue the requested building permit, or provide a second written notice to  
5 the permit applicant stating which of the previously identified documents or permit features remain  
6 in noncompliance with the applicable codes, with specific reference to the relevant code chapters  
7 and sections. If the regulatory authority does not provide the second written notice within the tolling  
8 ten (10) business days, plus one additional business day, the development document or building  
9 permit shall be deemed approved as a matter of law, and any necessary permits shall be issued by  
10 the regulatory authority on the next business day.

11 (d) Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter, any decisions regarding the issuance of  
12 a development document or building permit by a regulatory authority may be appealed to the Rhode  
13 Island building code standards commission, which shall adjudicate the dispute.

14 **45-22.5-7. Limits on regulatory authorities.**

15 (a) A regulatory authority may not adopt or enforce any laws, rules, procedures, policies,  
16 qualifications, or standards regarding independent providers more restrictive than those prescribed  
17 by this chapter.

18 (b) This section shall not be construed to limit or deny the authority of the regulatory  
19 authority to issue a stop-work order for a building project or any portion of the project, as provided  
20 by law, if the regulatory authority determines that a condition on the building site constitutes an  
21 immediate threat to public safety and welfare.

22 (c) If an applicant believes that the regulatory authority or the Rhode Island building code  
23 standards commission has interpreted existing ordinances, codes, and laws in error, or any of the  
24 following:

25 (1) Rejected a certificate of compliance;

26 (2) Rejected a development document in error;

27 (3) Has not provided a sufficient reduction in fees due to cost-savings resulting from the  
28 use of an independent provider;

29 (4) Refused to issue any valid building permit; or

30 (5) Suspended an independent provider from performing building inspections in their  
31 jurisdiction in error, an independent provider, owner, or owner's contractor may file an action in a  
32 court of competent jurisdiction seeking a determination that the inspection or document or permit  
33 complies with all relevant requirements, and may petition the court for an order requiring the  
34 regulatory authority to accept the document or inspection and issue any necessary building permits

1 [or certificate of occupancy or completion.](#)

2 **45-22.5-8. Severability.**

3 [The provisions of this chapter are severable. If any provision of this chapter or the](#)  
4 [application of such provision to any person or circumstance is declared or held to be invalid for any](#)  
5 [reason, such declaration or holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this](#)  
6 [chapter and the application of its provisions to any other persons or circumstances.](#)

7 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect sixty (60) days after passage.

=====  
LC003617  
=====

EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW EFFICIENCY  
ACT

\*\*\*

1           This act would allow property owners or their contractors to hire licensed third-party  
2 professionals to review development documents and perform building inspections. It would  
3 establish standards, timelines, fee reductions, and appeal rights to streamline permitting and  
4 inspections and improve efficiency in the development review process.

5           This act would take effect sixty (60) days after passage.

=====  
LC003617  
=====