

2025 -- S 0495 SUBSTITUTE A

LC001644/SUB A

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

Introduced By: Senators Gu, Burke, Kallman, Bissaillon, and Tikoian

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: Senate Housing & Municipal Government

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

- 1
- SECTION 1. Chapter 42-64.34 of the General Laws entitled "The Department of Housing"
- 2
- is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:
- 3
- 42-64.34-5. Rhode Island housing champion designation.**
- 4
- (a) The department of housing shall develop a Rhode Island housing champion designation
- 5
- program for all qualifying municipalities. The Rhode Island housing champion designation
- 6
- program shall be voluntary. Each municipality shall have the option, in its sole discretion, to apply
- 7
- to the department to receive the Rhode Island housing champion designation. In exchange for
- 8
- obtaining the Rhode Island housing champion designation, a municipality shall receive preferential
- 9
- access to state resources including, but not limited to, discretionary state funds, as available.
- 10
- (b) The department shall adopt rules to establish qualifications and procedures for a
- 11
- municipality to receive the Rhode Island housing champion designation. The designation procedure
- 12
- shall be based on a scoring system.
- 13
- (c) Qualifications to receive the Rhode Island housing champion designation shall include:
- 14
- (1) Adoption of such land use regulations and ordinances which the department determines
- 15
- to be necessary to promote the development of housing consistent with the State Guide Plan
- 16
- housing element, and other types of housing necessary for the economic development of the state.
- 17
- In this subsection, "land use regulations and ordinances" may include, but are not limited to, zoning
- 18
- ordinances to innovative land use controls, subdivision and the site plan regulations.

1           (2) Training of planning and zoning board members using, training materials and programs,  
2 provided by the department that cover the processes, procedures, regulations, and statutes related  
3 to the board on which the member serves; approved by the department.

4           (3) Planning or implementation of sewer and water infrastructure improvements intended  
5 to support the development of housing consistent with the State Guide Plan housing element.

6           (4) Planning or implementation of sidewalks, bike lanes, or other infrastructure intended  
7 to support walkable or bikeable neighborhoods or public transportation.

8           (d) Qualifications to receive the Rhode Island housing champion designation may also  
9 include, but are not limited to, adoption of financial tools that incentivize the development of  
10 housing, including adoption of the community revitalization tax relief incentive program and  
11 establishment of municipal economic development and revitalization districts.

12           (e) Municipalities that receive a Rhode Island housing champion designation, shall  
13 annually report such measures as the department may determine including, but not limited to, land  
14 use board applications, approvals and building permits.

15           (f) A Rhode Island housing champion designation shall be valid for three (3) years from  
16 the date such designation is awarded. A municipality may seek renewal of its Rhode Island housing  
17 champion designation for subsequent three (3) year periods. The department shall include in the  
18 criteria for renewal performance metrics including, but not limited to, the qualifications listed in  
19 subsection (c) of this section.

20           (g) Each year the department shall develop a report which describes all actions taken related  
21 to the operation of the Rhode Island housing champion designation program in the preceding state  
22 fiscal year and assesses the overall impact of the Rhode Island housing champion designation  
23 program, including an assessment of the additional housing units produced in the state as a result  
24 of the program's operation and incentives. The report required by this section shall be submitted to  
25 the governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the president of the senate on or  
26 before November 1 of each year, beginning in 2026, and upon such submission, the report shall be  
27 posted online on the website of the department.

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

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T  
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE DEPARTMENT OF  
HOUSING

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- 1           This act would authorize the establishment of a Rhode Island housing champion
- 2 designation program. This program would make qualified municipalities eligible to receive
- 3 preferential access to state resources.
- 4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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