

Single-Exit, Single-Stairway Apartment Building Model Legislation

Section 1. Title

- (a) This Act shall be known and may be cited as the “Single Stair Act.”

Section 2. Purpose and Intent

- (a) The purpose of this Act is to authorize safe, code-conforming apartment buildings served by a single exit and single interior stairway in order to expand housing design flexibility, improve unit layouts, and reduce unnecessary barriers to multifamily housing production, without compromising safety.
- (b) This Act is intended to establish statewide standards for single-exit, single-stairway apartment buildings that maintain life-safety protections while allowing broader use of this building form in residential construction.

Section 3. Definitions

For purposes of this Act:

- (a) “Apartment Building” means a building, or portion thereof, containing two (2) or more dwelling units for primarily permanent residential occupancy, classified as Group R-2, or any equivalent multifamily residential occupancy classification under the applicable state or local building code.
- (b) “High-Rise Building” means a building classified as a high-rise or equivalent under the applicable state or local building code.
- (c) “Latest Published National Model Building Code” means the most recent published edition of a nationally recognized model building code used by the state, and any subsequent edition adopted or recognized by the State Code Body.
- (d) “Local Authority” means a city, county, city and county, municipality, town, village, borough, parish, or other political subdivision, including a chartered jurisdiction, with authority to administer or enforce building, fire, or life-safety codes or to review,

approve, inspect, or issue permits for an Apartment Building.

- (e) “Single-Exit, Single-Stairway Apartment Building” means an Apartment Building in which the stories or portions of stories authorized by this Act are served by one exit and one interior stairway.
- (f) “State Code Body” means the state agency, board, department, or other authority responsible for adoption or amendment of the state building code and referenced standards.

Section 4. Authorization for Apartment Buildings Not Exceeding Four Stories

- (a) Notwithstanding any other law, an Apartment Building not exceeding four (4) stories above grade plane and not classified as a High-Rise Building may be designed, approved, and constructed with a single exit if the building complies with the provisions of the Latest Published National Model Building Code governing the number of required exits and stairways for Group R-2 apartment buildings not exceeding four (4) stories above grade plane, together with any conditions within those provisions necessary for their application.
- (b) Compliance with subdivision (a) shall be deemed compliance with state and local building code requirements with respect to the number of required exits and stairways for buildings authorized by this Section.

Section 5. Authorization for Apartment Buildings Exceeding Four Stories but Not Exceeding Six Stories

- (a) An Apartment Building exceeding four (4) stories above grade plane but not exceeding six (6) stories above grade plane, and not classified as a High-Rise Building, shall be permitted to be designed, approved, and constructed with a single exit and single interior stairway if all of the following requirements are met:
 - (1) The building complies with Section 4, other than the four-story limitation..
 - (2) No dwelling unit in the building opens directly into an interior exit stairway.
 - (3) The building satisfies one of the following mitigation pathways:
 - (A) Common Means of Egress Smoke Detection Pathway. Smoke detectors shall be provided in the common means of egress, including common corridors serving as part of the required means of egress, and shall be arranged to activate the building fire alarm system independently of sprinkler waterflow.

- (B) Enhanced Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance Pathway. The building owner shall comply with an enhanced inspection, testing, and maintenance program for the fire sprinkler system and fire alarm system, including inspection, testing, and maintenance consistent with NFPA 25 and NFPA 72, and periodic inspection of dwelling unit door closers and exit stairway door closers, latching, and operation consistent with NFPA 80. The local fire code official may require annual documentation demonstrating compliance with this subparagraph.

Section 6. Statewide Effect and Local Implementation

- (a) A Single-Exit, Single-Stairway Apartment Building that satisfies Section 4 or Section 5 shall be deemed compliant with state and local building-code requirements governing the number of required exits and exit stairways.
- (b) A Local Authority shall not deny or delay approval of a project solely because conforming code text has not yet been adopted or published by the State Code Body, provided that the project complies with this Act and all other applicable building, fire, and life-safety requirements.
- (c) A Local Authority may adopt a conforming ordinance or resolution to implement this Act, but local adoption is not required for this Act to apply. A local jurisdiction shall not impose an additional condition, limitation, mitigation measure, or building standard based solely on the use of a single exit or single stairway unless expressly authorized by this Act or another state statute.
- (d) An ordinance or resolution adopted solely to implement this Act, and that does not impose additional substantive building standards, shall not be considered a local change or modification to building standards for purposes of state law governing local building-code amendments.
- (e) No later than twelve (12) months after the effective date of this Act, the State Code Body and any other state agency with relevant building-standard authority shall adopt and publish conforming amendments to the state building code through the earliest code-adoption cycle, supplement, rulemaking process, or other procedure permitted by law.
- (f) The State Code Body may make nonsubstantive technical, clerical, numbering, and cross-reference changes necessary to integrate the standards authorized by this Act into the state building code. The State Code Body shall not materially narrow, condition,

or otherwise alter the substantive standards adopted or incorporated by this Act unless expressly authorized by a subsequent Act of the Legislature.

Section 7. Severability

- (a) If any provision of this Act, or its application to any person or circumstance, is found to be invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, such provision shall be severable, and the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 8. Effective Date

- (a) This act is ordered to take effect on January 1st of the subsequent year of when the act is established.