
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5491

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Senate Local Government, Land Use & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Senators Salomon, Shewmake, Frame, Lias, and Stanford)

READ FIRST TIME 02/17/23.

1 AN ACT Relating to allowing for residential buildings of a
2 certain height to be served by a single exit under certain
3 conditions; amending RCW 19.27.042; adding a new section to chapter
4 19.27 RCW; and providing an expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 19.27
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) The legislative body of a county or city, in exercising the
9 authority provided under RCW 19.27.060 to amend the code enumerated
10 in RCW 19.27.031(1)(b), may adopt amendments that allow for up to
11 five stories of group R-2 occupancy to be served by a single exit
12 under the following conditions:

13 (a) The building does not have more than six stories above grade
14 plane;

15 (b) The building does not contain a boarding house;

16 (c) The building does not contain a state licensed facility as
17 defined in WAC 246-314-010;

18 (d) The building does not have more than four dwellings on any
19 floor;

20 (e) The building is constructed with not less than one-hour fire-
21 resistive construction and is also equipped throughout with an

1 automatic sprinkler system in accordance with section 903.3.1.1 of
2 the International Building Code. Residential-type sprinklers must be
3 used in all habitable spaces in each dwelling unit;

4 (f) There are not more than two single exit stairway conditions
5 on the same property for buildings four stories tall or higher;

6 (g) An exterior stairway or interior exit stairway is provided.
7 The interior exit stairway, including any related exit passageway,
8 must be pressurized in accordance with section 909.20 of the
9 International Building Code. Doors in the stairway must swing into
10 the interior exit stairway regardless of the occupant load served,
11 provided that doors from the interior exit stairway to the building
12 exterior are permitted to swing in the direction of exit travel;

13 (h) A corridor separates each dwelling unit entry/exit door from
14 the door to an interior exit stairway, including any related exit
15 passageway, on each floor. Dwelling unit doors must not open directly
16 into an interior exit stairway. Dwelling unit doors are permitted to
17 open directly into an exterior stairway;

18 (i) There are not more than 20 feet of travel to the exit
19 stairway from the entry/exit door of any dwelling unit;

20 (j) Travel distance measured in accordance with section 1017 of
21 the International Building Code does not exceed 125 feet;

22 (k) The exit does not terminate in an egress court where the
23 court depth exceeds the court width unless it is possible to exit in
24 either direction to the public way;

25 (l) Elevators are pressurized in accordance with section 909.21
26 of the International Building Code or open into elevator lobbies that
27 comply with section 713.14 of the International Building Code. Where
28 approved by the building official, natural ventilation is permitted
29 to be substituted for pressurization where the ventilation would
30 prevent the accumulation of smoke or toxic gases;

31 (m)(i) Other occupancies are permitted in the same building
32 provided they comply with all other requirements of this subsection
33 (1). Except as provided in (m)(ii) of this subsection, other
34 occupancies must not communicate with the group R occupancy portion
35 of the building or with the single-exit stairway;

36 (ii) Parking garages and occupied roofs accessory to the group R
37 occupancy are permitted to communicate with the exit stairway;

38 (n) The exit serving the group R occupancy does not discharge
39 through any other occupancy, including an accessory parking garage;
40 and

1 (o) There are no openings within 10 feet of unprotected openings
2 into the stairway other than required exit doors having a one-hour
3 fire-resistance rating.

4 (2)(a) A city that intends to adopt amendments under subsection
5 (1) of this section must meet the following criteria prior to
6 adoption:

7 (i) The city is served by a municipal fire department or fire
8 district; and

9 (ii) The city does not have a current restriction on development
10 due to lack of fire flow capacity as set forth in WAC 246-290-221.
11 Minimum fire flow capacity must be at least 750 gallons per minute
12 for 60 minutes, as set forth in WAC 246-293-640.

13 (b) Nothing in this subsection precludes a city from making a
14 determination that the city does not have appropriate fire apparatus
15 or hydrant networks to serve single stairwell buildings.

16 (3) This section expires July 1, 2026.

17 **Sec. 2.** RCW 19.27.042 and 1991 c 139 s 1 are each amended to
18 read as follows:

19 (1) Effective January 1, 1992, the legislative authorities of
20 cities and counties may adopt an ordinance or resolution to exempt
21 from state building code requirements buildings whose character of
22 use or occupancy has been changed in order to provide housing for
23 indigent persons. The ordinance or resolution allowing the exemption
24 shall include the following conditions:

25 (a) The exemption is limited to existing buildings located in
26 this state;

27 (b) Any code deficiencies to be exempted pose no threat to human
28 life, health, or safety;

29 (c) The building or buildings exempted under this section are
30 owned or administered by a public agency or nonprofit corporation;
31 and

32 (d) The exemption is authorized for no more than five years on
33 any given building. An exemption for a building may be renewed if the
34 requirements of this section are met for each renewal.

35 (2) By January 1, 1992, the state building code council shall
36 adopt by rule, guidelines for cities and counties exempting buildings
37 under subsection (1) of this section.

38 (3) By July 1, 2026, the state building code council shall adopt,
39 by rule, standards to allow for up to five stories of group R-2

1 occupancy to be served by a single exit and make them available for
2 local adoption.

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