

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Kislak, Henries, Alzate, Stewart, Hull, Morales, Cotter, Sanchez, Felix, and Speakman

Date Introduced: February 21, 2023

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND  
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 165

4 EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT ACT

5 **42-165-1. Short title.**

6 This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Equity Impact Statement Act."

7 **42-165-2. Findings.**

8 The general assembly hereby finds and declares that:

9 (1) Persistent, widespread and unacceptable disparities exist in Rhode Island for  
10 individuals and families as a result of structural inequities and past discrimination.

11 (2) Rhode Island has passed legislation prohibiting discrimination based on race, color,  
12 ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, or country  
13 of ancestral origin, including in employment and housing matters.

14 (3) Past legislation in Rhode Island has been implemented without attention to equity.  
15 Some of this legislation has had disparate impacts on some of our communities. It is therefore the  
16 desire of the general assembly to address the impacts of our legislation moving forward, and to do  
17 so with attention to equity and the impact our legislation will have on our diverse and various  
18 communities.

1 (4) Discrimination and inequities based on these protected classifications is inconsistent  
2 with the protections outlined in the state constitution as well as in Rhode Island legislation. These  
3 inequities affect the quality of life, access to services, access to safe and affordable housing, access  
4 to capital as well as educational and economic attainment for some Rhode Island populations  
5 differently than for others.

6 (5) While awareness is not enough to reverse long-standing structural factors that cause  
7 these disparities, it must be the starting point.

8 (6) Beginning in 2007, some states, including Connecticut and Massachusetts, began  
9 implementing racial impact statements to address racial disparities in their criminal justice systems.  
10 In 2019, Maine created a permanent commission to address historic and pervasive racial inequity  
11 in legislation. This act aims to build on that foundation here in Rhode Island, proposing the  
12 inclusion of a new legislative tool, a broad equity impact statement accounting for race, color,  
13 ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, or country  
14 of ancestral origin.

15 (7) As there has historically been no process to guide analysis of equity impacts as  
16 legislation is considered in the Rhode Island general assembly, this act will add the expectation of  
17 an equity impact statement in the legislative process for the purpose of contributing to the  
18 development of sound and fair policy. Equity impact statements will serve as a tool to inform  
19 legislators of potential consequences of policies that may have a disproportionate impact on  
20 historically disadvantaged populations prior to enacting new legislation, thus assuring that the  
21 general assembly takes each opportunity available to increase equity and decrease disparities.

22 **42-165-3. Equity impact statements.**

23 (a) An equity impact statement shall be a simple and understandable statement  
24 demonstrating that the bill sponsor has taken into account the impact, positive or negative, that the  
25 legislation will likely have on Rhode Islanders based on their race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex,  
26 sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age or country of ancestral origin.

27 The sponsor of legislations shall ensure that bills are submitted with an equity impact  
28 statement which shall be appended to the bill summary and contain:

29 (1) A description of the way in which the legislation will or will not impact different  
30 populations differently based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex sexual orientation, gender  
31 expression, disability, age or country of ancestral origin; and

32 (2) A reference to historic disparities and existing efforts to address the historic disparities.

33 (b) The equity impact statement requirement may be met with a statement that there are no  
34 discernable impacts based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity

1 [or expression, disability, age, or country of ancestral origin, if applicable.](#)

2 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 -- EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT  
ACT

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1           This act would create the "equity impact statement act", requiring that all legislation  
2 submitted in the general assembly include an equity impact statement to address what impact the  
3 legislation will have on Rhode Island residents based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual  
4 orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age or country of ancestral origin.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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