

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND THIRTEEN

—
H.P. 130 - L.D. 155

An Act To Streamline the Approval of Accessibility Structures

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, when a person with a disability requires approval to build a ramp that provides access to that person's dwelling, delay in the approval process can pose significant hardship; and

Whereas, applying for approval through a municipal board can be a slow process, and this Act allows an application to be made through a municipal code enforcement officer, which could provide a more expeditious proceeding; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 30-A MRSA §4353, sub-§4, as amended by PL 1997, c. 148, §1, is further amended to read:

4. Variance. Except as provided in subsections 4-A, 4-B and 4-C and section 4353-A, the board may grant a variance only when strict application of the ordinance to the petitioner and the petitioner's property would cause undue hardship. The term "undue hardship" as used in this subsection means:

- A. The land in question can not yield a reasonable return unless a variance is granted;
- B. The need for a variance is due to the unique circumstances of the property and not to the general conditions in the neighborhood;
- C. The granting of a variance will not alter the essential character of the locality; and

D. The hardship is not the result of action taken by the applicant or a prior owner.

Under its home rule authority, a municipality may, in a zoning ordinance, adopt additional limitations on the granting of a variance, including, but not limited to, a provision that a variance may be granted only for a use permitted in a particular zone.

Sec. 2. 30-A MRSA §4353-A is enacted to read:

§4353-A. Code enforcement officer; authority for disability structures permits

Notwithstanding section 4353, a municipality by ordinance may authorize a code enforcement officer to issue a permit to an owner of a dwelling for the purpose of making a dwelling accessible to a person with a disability who resides in or regularly uses the dwelling. If the permit requires a variance, the permit is deemed to include that variance solely for the installation of equipment or the construction of structures necessary for access to or egress from the dwelling for the person with a disability. The code enforcement officer may impose conditions on the permit, including limiting the permit to the duration of the disability or to the time that the person with a disability lives in the dwelling.

For the purposes of this section, the term "structures necessary for access to or egress from the dwelling" includes ramps and associated railings, walls or roof systems necessary for the safety or effectiveness of the ramps.

For the purposes of this section, "disability" has the same meaning as a physical or mental disability under Title 5, section 4553-A.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.