

2024 -- H 7159

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LC004040
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENTS OF STATE
GOVERNMENT

Introduced By: Representatives Vella-Wilkinson, Batista, Hull, Kazarian, Azzinaro,
Noret, Ackerman, Morales, and Shanley

Date Introduced: January 11, 2024

Referred To: House Innovation, Internet, & Technology

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 42-6 of the General Laws entitled "Departments of State
2 Government" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **42-6-16. Website accessibility.**

4 (a) State departments enumerated in § 42-6-1 and state boards, divisions, bureaus,
5 commissions and agencies shall, when designing or creating new public access websites, ensure
6 design and code be in compliance with the web content accessibility guidelines 2.2 ("WCAG 2.2"),
7 or a subsequent version published by the Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web
8 Consortium at a level AA success criteria.

9 (b) State departments enumerated in § 42-6-1 and state boards, divisions, bureaus,
10 commissions and agencies shall, on or before July 1, 2026, design or redesign and code or recode
11 existing public access websites to be in compliance with WCAG 2.2 or a subsequent version
12 published by the Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web Consortium at a level AA
13 success criteria. Websites providing access to healthcare, human services, open government, and
14 benefits shall be prioritized.

15 (c) Upon creation or activation of a website subject to the provisions of subsection (a) of
16 this section and, on or before July 1, 2026, for a website subject to the provisions of subsection (b)
17 of this section, the director of each state department and/or the executive or administrative head of
18 each state agency or entity, and the information technology project manager assigned pursuant to

1 § 42-6-15 to manage compliance with the provisions of this section, shall obtain certification by a
2 recognized expert and shall post on the home page of the website the signed certification of the
3 recognized expert that the website is in compliance with the standards provided in this section.
4 Recertification shall occur at least once every two (2) years or anytime a major redesign or major
5 structural change to the website is undertaken.

6 (d) Any state contract or request for proposals, issued after January 1, 2025, that includes
7 development or provision of web-based services or sites shall include a requirement of certification
8 of WCAG 2.2 level AA compliance as set forth in subsection (c) of this section.

9 (e) Municipalities are strongly encouraged and recommended to adopt and implement a
10 program to make municipal websites more accessible by adoption of standards consistent with the
11 provisions of this section.

12 (f) The governor's commission on disabilities shall provide a recognized expert for
13 certification and recertification of state websites as well as public websites upon request.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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1 This act would require all newly established public access websites to be in compliance
2 with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 (WCAG 2.2) for accessibility in compliance with
3 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Existing state websites would be required
4 to comply no later than July 1, 2026. Municipalities would be strongly encouraged to adopt
5 consistent standards with the WCAG 2.2 provisions.

6 This act would take effect upon passage.

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