
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5505

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF CERTAIN COMMERCIAL WAREHOUSES FOR THE HOUSING OR SHELTER OF PERSONS.

SUMMARY

With certain exceptions, this bill requires anyone who plans to use a commercial warehouse for over 24 hours to provide shelter or housing for people to first get a municipal permit. Before issuing a permit, municipalities must hold a public hearing and ensure certain health and safety requirements will be met. But municipalities, by vote of the legislative body or selectmen, can opt to prohibit issuing these permits.

The bill specifically exempts the following housing or sheltering activities from its provisions, including the permitting process:

1. continuing to use a warehouse for housing or shelter if it is being used for that purpose when the bill takes effect,
2. providing housing or shelter after the governor declares an emergency or major disaster,
3. temporarily providing a warming or cooling shelter, or
4. converting commercial buildings into dwellings under a local option zoning regulation that makes the municipality eligible for greyfield revitalization program grants.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

COVERED ENTITIES, STRUCTURES, AND USES

Regardless of conflicting state laws and local laws and resolutions, the bill prohibits anyone from using a commercial warehouse for more than 24 hours to house or shelter people, unless a local permit is obtained first or the use is exempt (see above). The bill applies broadly to individuals, legal or business entities, and government agencies and

entities subject to state law. The permitting requirement applies to anyone who wants to use, operate, or permit the use of (“use”) a commercial warehouse for housing or sheltering purposes. (Presumably, only one permit is required for each covered warehouse.)

Under the bill, “commercial warehouses” are buildings or structures that are over 25,000 square feet and were primarily designed, or previously used, for importing, storing, or distributing commercial goods.

LOCAL PERMIT REQUIRED

The bill requires anyone covered by the permitting requirement to obtain a permit from the municipality before starting to use a warehouse for housing or sheltering purposes. Each municipality is responsible for designating the individual or board with responsibility for reviewing applications and issuing permits.

As part of the permitting process, the designated officer or board must hold a public hearing. Additionally, within three business days of submitting the application, the applicant must notify each owner of property bordering the warehouse about it by certified or registered mail.

The permitting authority has 180 business days to make a decision after the permit application’s submission.

Required Health and Safety Assurances

A permit cannot be issued unless the applicant demonstrates that anyone housed or sheltered in the warehouse will have continuous access to:

1. adequate space to maintain health and safety;
2. sanitary restroom and shower facilities and potable drinking water;
3. sleeping accommodations (including a bed, cot, or elevated sleeping surface with clean bedding);

4. sufficient heating and cooling to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature; and
5. sufficient storage to secure personal belongings.

Additionally, the bill requires that these warehouses:

1. comply with the state's building, fire prevention, fire safety, and public health codes as they apply to public lodging accommodations; and
2. have at least 200 square feet of indoor space for each person housed or sheltered.

Verification, Inspections, and Permit Revocation

Municipalities may require anyone with such a permit to submit written evidence that the use continues to comply with the bill's health and safety requirements. Municipalities (including their code enforcement employees) may verify this by inspecting the warehouse.

The bill allows the local permitting authority to revoke or suspend a permit if the permittee violates the bill's requirements.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Planning and Development Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 13 Nay 8 (03/13/2026)