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SB-280 Building standards: fall prevention. (2019-2020)

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Senate Bill No. 280

CHAPTER 640

An act to add Section 17922.15 to the Health and Safety Code, relating to building standards.

[Approved by Governor October 08, 2019. Filed with Secretary of State October 08, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 280, Jackson. Building standards: fall prevention.

Existing law, the California Building Standards Law, provides for the adoption of building standards by state agencies by requiring all state agencies that adopt or propose adoption of any building standard to submit the building standard to the California Building Standards Commission for approval and adoption. Existing law requires the commission to publish, or cause to be published, editions of the code in its entirety once every 3 years. Existing law, the State Housing Law, requires the Department of Housing and Community Development to propose the adoption, amendment, or repeal of building standards to the California Building Standards Commission.

This bill would, at the next triennial building standards rulemaking cycle that commences on or after January 1, 2020, require the Department of Housing and Community Development to investigate possible changes to the building standards in the California Residential Code for adoption by the California Building Standards Commission to promote aging-in-place design, as specified.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) According to the Public Policy Institute of California, by 2030, the California population of persons 65 years of age and older will increase by more than four million.
- (b) Most older adults prefer to remain in their own homes as long as possible, but many are forced into skilled nursing, assisted living, or other congregate living options because their homes are no longer physically safe for them to live in.
- (c) Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries for Californians 65 years of age and older.
- (d) In 2014, there were 208,564 Californians 65 years of age and older treated in emergency departments for fall-related injuries and 74,954 were hospitalized as a result of an unintentional fall injury.
- (e) In 2013, 1,733 Californians died as a result of a fall injury.

(f) Many of those fall patients will use Medicare, Medicaid, or both, to pay their medical expenses, including the charges for skilled nursing or rehabilitation facilities, costing the federal and state governments large amounts of money.

(g) The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that there are proven interventions that can reduce falls and help older adults live better and longer.

(h) The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' evidence-based review of multifactorial fall prevention programs concluded that the incidence of falls was reduced by a minimum of 11 percent with a potential of a 23-percent reduction when falls prevention strategies are implemented.

(i) In many cases, the retrofit of homes to add fall prevention features to an existing house can be quite expensive and beyond the means of senior residents.

SEC. 2. Section 17922.15 is added to the Health and Safety Code, to read:

17922.15. (a) At the next triennial building standards rulemaking cycle that commences on or after January 1, 2020, the Department of Housing and Community Development shall investigate possible changes to the building standards in the California Residential Code (Part 2.5 of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations) that promote aging-in-place design and are limited to all of the following:

(1) The location of doorbells, light switches, and heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) controls that are reachable by those with mobility impairments.

(2) The installation of support backing for the later installation of grab bars in one or more bathrooms.

(3) The provision of a 32-inch clearance in the width opening for one bathroom door and one bedroom door on the ground floor, or, in the case of a two- or three-story single-family dwelling, on the second or third floor of the dwelling if a bathroom or bedroom is not located on the ground floor.

(b) If the department determines that one or more of the changes described in subdivision (a) can be incorporated into the California Residential Code without significantly increasing the cost of construction, the department may propose building standards to that effect for consideration by the California Building Standards Commission. The department shall include in any proposed building standard, regarding the 32-inch clearance width for a bathroom and bedroom door described in paragraph (3) of subdivision (a), a finding whether a delay of 18 months in the effective date of that proposed building standard is warranted to provide adequate time for industry to incorporate this change into standard designs.