**House Transportation, Housing & Local Government**

**03/18/2025 Upon Adjournment**

**HB25-1273 Residential Building Stair Modernization**

**Typed Text of Testimony Submitted**

| Name, Position, Representing | Typed Text of Testimony |
|---|---|
| Jared McGlothlin<br>For<br>themself | To the members of the committee,<br><br>My name is Jared McGlothlin and I am a graduate student at Colorado State University. I am also a member of the CSU Housing Caucus, a group of students working to solve housing issues in the Fort Collins area. I am writing today in support of HB25-1273.<br><br>I moved to Colorado from Seattle, Washington where the buildings outlined in this bill are already legal. I saw first hand the role single stair apartments were able to play within a working city. Near the University of Washington, these buildings were one of the most affordable options for students, especially those who were just looking for a studio apartment. In other parts of the city, single stair apartments provided affordable 1-3 bedroom apartments for anyone from young professionals to established families.<br><br>Due to their small footprint and reduced cost of construction, these buildings are able to fit into the existing urban fabric in many neighborhoods. Fort Collins in particular has many neighborhoods, especially surrounding Colorado State University, that would greatly benefit from this attractive, affordable, and easy to build style of apartment. With the cost of rent continuously rising, creative solutions are needed in Colorado cities to keep people from being rent burdened. Students are especially vulnerable, and new strategies are badly needed in our college towns.<br><br>For these reasons I urge you to vote yes on House Bill 1273.<br><br>Thank you. |

March 16, 2025

**RE: HB25-1273 Residential Building Stair Modernization —SUPPORT**

Dear Members of the Transportation, Housing & Local Government Committee:

My name is Kate van Houten, and I am a Volunteer Lobbyist with the League of Women Voters of Colorado's Legislative Action Committee. **I am writing in support of bill number, on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Colorado.**

The League of Women Voters of Colorado (LWVCO) has been a nonpartisan organization for 105 years, encourages informed and active participation in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Our membership spans the state of Colorado with 19 local leagues operating in several regions around the state.

The LWVCO supports policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every person, and equal rights and equal opportunity for all.

Revisiting the concepts presented in last year's failed HB24-1239 Single-Exit Stairway Multifamily Structure, modifications to this year's bill, HB25-1273, are designed to address the concerns expressed by all stakeholders, including municipalities, Counties, builders, developers and affordable housing proponents.

- Restrict adoption of new codes to "urban" municipalities (populations of 100,000 or greater)
- Ensure fire/emergency services are in place to serve the "urban" municipalities
- Give specifications as to occupancy numbers and levels/flights
- Support quality of life, health and energy efficiency
- Require sprinklers systems and fire-resistant (which are also energy efficient) building materials

The International Building Code (IBC) either is in use or adopted in all 50 states of the United States of America, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam, Northern Marianas Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. The International Code Council (ICC) promulgates a new International Building Code every 3 years through the ICC Code Development Process. The bill sponsors have been coordinating with this code development Council regarding the 2027 3-year update, and modernizations regarding single-stair residential building codes are being drafted now. The considered modernization of such egress codes are included in this bill.

Many other nations have successfully adopted such modernized egress codes and have been building infill multi-family homes with great success. Within the United States, New York City, Washington State/Seattle and Hawaii have all be implementing this affordable housing strategy for some years.

Current codes require double loaded corridor stairwells, which require a larger footprint, meaning more land acquisition, adding to the overall higher cost, and limiting the placement of such buildings to large open areas, adding to urban sprawl, instead of creating infill projects. Plus, the larger buildings do not have codes that require sprinklers, offer options on unit size, and have poor fire safety statistics compared to smaller single-stair projects.

The Center for Fire Statics of the CTIF (International Association of Fire and Rescue Services) is specifically referenced within the Bill Text.

> Between 2018 and 2022, the United States had a higher rate of fire deaths per 100,000 inhabitants than most countries that allow single stairway construction greater than 3 stories, including many countries in Europe, according to the Center for Fire Statistics World Fire Statistics Report, No. 29.
> [See *Bill Text*, Section 1(j), pp 3-4]

The link to the referenced 2024 Report No. 29 is
https://www.ctif.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/CTIF_Report29_ERG.pdf

**We urge the committee members to vote YES on bill number HB25-1273** Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

Respectfully,
Kate van Houten, Volunteer Lobbyist, Housing
League of Women Voters of Colorado
1410 Grant Street, Suite B-204
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303-863-0437

INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE

March 18, 2025

Re: Support for HB 25-1273

Chair Froelich, Vice Chair Stewart, and Members of the House Transportation, Housing and Local Government Committee:

My name is Sophie Mars, and I am with the Institute for Justice (IJ)—a nonprofit law firm that works to protect Americans' civil liberties, including the rights to own and use property. As demand for housing continues to outstrip supply, outdated local zoning ordinances and building codes are straining the market, contributing to localized shortages and increasing costs.[1] Through its Zoning Justice Project, IJ seeks to reform restrictive regulations that limit housing supply. For the reasons below, the Institute for Justice **supports** House Bill 25-1273 (HB 25-1273).

Restrictive zoning and land-use regulations contribute significantly to the country's housing crisis. These regulations reduce housing by effectively prohibiting multifamily, small, and "missing middle" housing types. They also limit the construction of higher-density housing in urban cores, thus increasing transportation costs for working families. Costly and lengthy permitting processes discourage development and add to housing prices. And not only does restrictive zoning contribute to the *rise* in homelessness, but it can also restrict the ability of citizens and organizations to *respond* to homelessness.[2]

HB 25-1273, which would allow certain multifamily residential buildings to have a single exit, is a step towards a solution. This reform would align Colorado's building regulations with the best practices of cities worldwide, where single-stair designs promote efficient land use and greater housing availability.

One of the most significant barriers to housing construction is restrictive building codes, which often go beyond essential health and safety requirements and instead impose unnecessary design constraints. By allowing single-stair buildings up to five stories that satisfy certain conditions—such as the inclusion of automatic sprinkler systems and emergency exit provisions—HB 25-1273 would enable the development of safe, space-efficient housing to alleviate Colorado's housing crisis. Single-stair designs not only optimize available space but also reduce construction costs, making housing more attainable for lower- and middle-income residents.

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[1] "The Zoning Trap: How Local Planners Decide How We Live," https://ij.org/issues/zoning-justice/history-of-zoning/

[2] "Zoning Police and NIMBYs Want To Keep People Homeless," A. Bargil and D. James, Reason, https://reason.com/2024/07/19/zoning-police-and-nimbys-want-to-keep-people-homeless/; "With Winter Coming, the Institute for Justice Sues Kalispell, Montana, to Keep Warming Shelter Open," https://ij.org/case/flathead-warming-center/.

INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE

Moreover, the housing crisis is not confined to the boundaries of any one city or metropolitan area; it is a statewide and national issue that cannot be solved at the local level alone. The bill acknowledges this, saying, "[T]he general assembly declares that increasing the housing supply through more flexible construction design for small multifamily buildings is a matter of *mixed statewide and local concern* [emphasis added]." Indeed, municipalities—often responding to the outsized voices of a small but vocal minority—are incentivized to fall back on arguments about "local control," while hoping that other localities will permit the housebuilding which they refuse. State interventions, such as HB 25-1273, may be necessary to reinvigorate Colorado.

In every other sector of the economy, consumer demand is met with an array of choices at different price points. Housing should be no different. For these reasons, the Institute for Justice encourages the House Transportation, Housing and Local Government Committee to support HB 25-1273.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sophie Mars
Legislative Coordinator
Institute for Justice
smars@ij.org