

**BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 2835  
By: Johnson  
Local Government  
6/6/2025  
Enrolled

**AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Single stair buildings are small scale apartments that are built with a small number of apartments per floor, all served by a single stairwell. This building typology is used widely across the globe, but in the United States they have a limited presence due to restrictions imposed by the International Building Code (IBC)—a model design and building code that is used almost exclusively in the U.S. The IBC dictates that for apartments over three stories tall, each unit is required to have access to two stairwells. To meet the multi-staircase requirement, large apartment complexes are built using double loaded corridors with apartment units on both sides of a windowless hallway. To offset the loss in rentable space that is taken up by the second stairwell, double-loaded corridor buildings must be large. The single-stair prohibition means that multi-family apartments are only economically feasible at great density. Conversely, single-stair buildings are smaller and fit on lots that could not accommodate large complexes. They can achieve 95 percent floor plate efficiency and exist more cohesively within existing neighborhoods. They have better cross-ventilation and energy-efficiency and, with access to more lights on multiple side of a unit, can accommodate units with more bedrooms and better accommodate families. S.B. 2385 would allow cities to adopt standards outside of the IBC to build single stair apartments, clawing back authority to allow for the housing market to respond to the varied needs of Texas families. Supporters include: Texans for Reasonable Solutions, Habitat for Humanity (Dallas; Austin), Dallas Housing Coalition, AURA, Texans for Housing, and Institute for Justice.

(Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 2835 amends current law relating to municipal regulation of stairway requirements in certain apartment buildings.

**RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

**SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 214, Local Government Code, by adding Subchapter I, as follows:

**SUBCHAPTER I. SINGLE STAIRWAY IN CERTAIN APARTMENT BUILDINGS**

Sec. 214.301. PERMITTED REGULATION OF APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWAY REQUIREMENTS. (a) Authorizes a municipality to exercise the authority under this section regardless of whether the municipality has adopted local amendments to the International Building Code under Section 214.216(c) (relating to procedures a municipality is authorized to establish relating to the International Building Code).

(b) Provides that a municipality is authorized to authorize an apartment building to have a single stairway only if the building:

- (1) does not have more than six stories above grade plane and is not a high-rise as defined by the International Building Code, as adopted under Section 214.216 (International Building Code);
- (2) does not have more than four dwelling units on any floor;
- (3) has automatic sprinkler locations in each interior exit stairway, regardless of the type of stairway construction, that comply with the requirements prescribed by National Fire Protection Association Standard 13 for combustible stairways;
- (4) has an exterior stairway or an interior exit stairway for which the doors into the stairway from the interior of the building swing into the stairway regardless of the occupant load served and from the interior exit stairway to the building exterior swing in the direction of exit travel;
- (5) has interior exit stairway enclosures that have a fire resistance rating of not less than two hours and do not contain an elevator opening;
- (6) has on each floor a corridor from each dwelling unit entry or exit door to an interior exit stairway, including any related exit passageway, that has a fire resistance rating of at least one hour;
- (7) does not have more than 20 feet between the entry or exit door of a dwelling unit and an exit stairway;
- (8) does not have more than 125 feet of exit access travel distance;
- (9) has an exit serving the portion of the building that contains two or more dwelling units that does not discharge through a portion of the building with a different occupancy category, including an accessory parking garage;
- (10) has an exit that terminates in an egress court for which the court depth does not exceed the court width, unless it is possible to exit the egress court to the public way in either direction;
- (11) does not have an opening within 10 feet of an unprotected opening into an exit stairway other than a required exit door that has a fire resistance rating of at least one hour;
- (12) has emergency escape and rescue openings that comply with Section 1031 of the International Building Code as adopted under Section 214.216 on each floor served by a single exit;
- (13) does not have an electrical receptacle in an interior exit stairway; and
- (14) has an automatic smoke and fire detection system that activates an occupant notification system that complies with Section 907.5 of the International Building Code as adopted under Section 214.216 installed in each of certain areas in the building.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2025.