

## HOUSING LAW OF MICHIGAN (EXCERPT)

### Act 167 of 1917

#### ARTICLE I

#### GENERAL PROVISIONS.

##### **125.401 Short title; scope of act.**

Sec. 1. (1) This act shall be known and may be cited as the "housing law of Michigan".

(2) This act applies to each city, village, and township that, according to the last regular or special federal census, has a population of 10,000 or more. However, this act does not apply to private dwellings and 2-family dwellings in any city, village, or township having a population of less than 100,000 unless the legislative body of the local governmental unit adopts the provisions by resolution passed by a majority vote of its members.

(3) This act applies to all dwellings within the classes defined in section 2, except that a reference to 1 or more specific classes of dwellings applies only to those classes to which specific reference is made.

**History:** 1917, Act 167, Eff. Aug. 10, 1917;—Am. 1919, Act 326, Imd. Eff. May 13, 1919;—CL 1929, 2487;—Am. 1939, Act 303, Eff. Sept. 29, 1939;—Am. 1941, Act 91, Imd. Eff. May 16, 1941;—CL 1948, 125.401;—Am. 1976, Act 137, Imd. Eff. June 2, 1976;—Am. 2008, Act 408, Imd. Eff. Jan. 6, 2009;—Am. 2016, Act 14, Eff. May 16, 2016.

**Compiler's note:** The catchlines following the act section numbers of this act were incorporated as a part of the act when enacted.

##### **125.402 Housing law of Michigan; definitions.**

Sec. 2. Definitions. Certain words in this act are defined for the purposes thereof as follows: Words used in the present tense include the future; words in the masculine gender include the feminine and neuter; the singular number includes the plural and the plural the singular; the word "person" includes a corporation as well as a natural person.

(1) Dwelling. A "dwelling" is any house, building, structure, tent, shelter, trailer or vehicle, or portion thereof, (except railroad cars, on tracks or rights-of-way) which is occupied in whole or in part as the home, residence, living or sleeping place of 1 or more human beings, either permanently or transiently. A house trailer or other vehicle, when occupied or used as a dwelling, shall be subject to all the provisions of this act, except that house trailers or other vehicles, duly licensed as vehicles, may be occupied or used as a dwelling for reasonable periods or lengths of time, without being otherwise subject to the provisions of this act for dwellings, when located in a park or place designated or licensed for the purpose by the corporate community within which they are located: Provided, That such parking sites are equipped with adequate safety and sanitary facilities.

(1a). "Sub-standard dwelling" is a dwelling of any class which is not so equipped as to have each of the following items: running water, inside toilets; or a dwelling which has either inadequate cellar drainage, defective plumbing, and inside room having no windows therein, improper exits or defective stairways so as to make such dwelling a fire hazard.

(2) Classes of dwellings. For the purposes of this act dwellings are divided into the following classes: (a) "private dwellings," (b) "2 family dwellings," and (c) "multiple dwellings."

(a) A "private dwelling" is a dwelling occupied by but 1 family, and so designed and arranged as to provide cooking and kitchen accommodations for 1 family only.

(b) A "2 family dwelling" is a dwelling occupied by but 2 families, and so designed and arranged as to provide cooking and kitchen accommodations for 2 families only.

(c) A "multiple dwelling" is a dwelling occupied otherwise than as a private dwelling or 2 family dwelling.

(3) Classes of multiple dwellings. All multiple dwellings are dwellings and for the purpose of this act are divided into 2 classes, viz.: class a and class b.

Class a. Multiple dwellings of class a are dwellings which are occupied more or less permanently for residence purposes by several families and in which the rooms are occupied in apartments, suites or groups, in which each combination of rooms is so arranged and designed as to provide for cooking accommodations and toilet and kitchen sink accommodations within the separate units. This class includes tenement houses, flats, apartment houses, apartment hotels, bachelor apartments, studio apartments, duplex apartments, kitchenette apartments, and all other dwellings similarly occupied whether specifically enumerated herein or not.

Class b. Multiple dwellings of class b are dwellings which are occupied, as a rule transiently, as the more or less temporary abiding place of individuals who are lodged, with or without meals, and in which as a rule the rooms are occupied singly and without any attempt to provide therein or therewith cooking or kitchen accommodations for the individual occupants. This class includes hotels, lodging houses, boarding houses, furnished room houses, club houses, convents, asylums, hospitals, jails and all other dwellings similarly

occupied, whether specifically enumerated herein or not.

(3a) Rooming house. A "rooming house" under this act shall be construed to mean any dwelling occupied in such a manner that certain rooms, in excess of those used by the members of the immediate family and occupied as a home or family unit, are leased or rented to persons outside of the family, without any attempt to provide therein or therewith, cooking or kitchen accommodations for individuals leasing or renting rooms. In the case of single and 2 family dwellings the number of such bedrooms leased or rented to roomers shall not exceed 3, unless such dwellings be made to comply in all respects with the provisions of this act relating to multiple dwellings.

(4) Hotel. A "hotel" is a multiple-dwelling of class b in which persons are lodged for hire and in which there are more than 50 sleeping rooms, a public dining room for the accommodation of at least 50 guests, and a general kitchen.

(5) Mixed occupancy. In cases of mixed occupancy where a building is occupied in part as a dwelling, the part so occupied shall be deemed a dwelling for the purposes of this act and shall comply with the provisions thereof relative to dwellings.

(6) Yards. A "rear yard" is an unoccupied space on the same lot with a dwelling, between the extreme rear line of the dwelling and the rear lot line and extending from 1 side lot line to the other side lot line. A "side yard" is an unoccupied space on the same lot with a dwelling between the side lot line and the nearest side line of the dwelling and extending from the extreme rear line of the dwelling to the front lot line. A "front yard" is an unoccupied space on the same lot with a dwelling between the extreme front line of the house and the front lot line and extending from 1 side yard to the other side yard.

(7) Courts. A "court" is an open unoccupied space on the same lot with a dwelling and bounded on 2 or more sides with the walls of the dwelling. A court not extending to the street or front or rear yard is an "inner court". A court extending to the street or front or rear yard is an "outer court".

(8) Corner and interior lots. A "corner lot" is a lot of which at least 2 adjacent sides abut for their full length upon a street. A lot other than a corner lot is an "interior lot."

(9) Front, rear and depth of lot. The front of a lot is that boundary line which borders on the street. In case of a corner lot the owner may elect by statement on his plans either street boundary line as the front. The rear of a lot is the side opposite to the front. In the case of a triangular or gore lot the rear is the boundary line not bordering on a street. The depth of a lot is the dimension measured from the front of the lot to the extreme rear line of the lot. In the case of irregular shaped lots the mean depth shall be taken.

(10) Public hall. A "public hall" is a hall, corridor or passageway not within the exclusive control of 1 family.

(11) Stair hall. A "stair hall" is a public hall and includes the stairs, stair landings and those portions of the building through which it is necessary to pass in going between the entrance floor and the roof.

(12) Basement, cellar, attic, penthouses.

(a) A "basement" is that portion of a building partly below grade but so located that the vertical distance from grade to the floor is not greater than the vertical distance from the grade to the ceiling: Provided, however, That if the vertical distance from the grade to the ceiling is 5 feet or more such basement shall be counted as a story.

(b) A "cellar" is that portion of a building partly below grade but so located that the vertical distance from the grade to the floor is greater than the vertical distance from the grade to the ceiling: Provided, however, That if the vertical distance from the grade to the ceiling is 5 feet or more such cellar shall be counted as a story. A cellar, except as provided above, shall not be counted as a story. If any portion of a building is in that part the equivalent of a basement or cellar, the provisions of this act relative to basements and cellars shall apply to such portion of the building.

(c) An attic is a portion of a building situated partly or wholly in the roof space. An attic which is used only as a portion of a single or 2 family dwelling shall be not counted as a story, unless there are more than 2 rooms suitable for living purposes on this floor. For the purpose of this paragraph, rooms of 160 square feet or more will be regarded as 2 or more rooms based on each 80 square feet being considered 1 room. Any attic which is occupied by a separate family shall be counted as a story. Any attic used for living purposes in a multiple dwelling shall be counted as a story.

(d) Penthouses. Penthouses are those portions of a building situated above the roof and housing mechanical equipment, service or recreational facilities or used for living purposes. A penthouse shall not be counted as a story if it houses only mechanical equipment or stairways and does not have an area in excess of 200 square feet; nor shall it be counted as a story, when occupied otherwise or when it has an area in excess of 200 square feet, if it complies with the following requirements:

(1) The building and penthouse shall be of fireproof construction if the penthouse houses other than mechanical equipment or stairways.

(2) The penthouse shall be not over 1 story in height.

(3) The exterior walls of the penthouse shall be set back from the exterior walls of the story immediately below by a distance not less than 2/3 of the height of the penthouse above the roof. However, it shall not be necessary to set back the exterior walls of a penthouse if the dimensions of yards and courts are sufficient to meet the requirements of this act for a building if the penthouse is counted as a story.

(4) There shall be access to 2 stairways leading from the roof to grade where penthouses are used for the purposes other than to house mechanical equipment.

(5) The combined area of all penthouses on a building shall not exceed 25 per cent of the gross area of the floor immediately below.

(13) Height. The "height" of a dwelling is the perpendicular distance measured in a straight line from grade to the highest point of the roof beams in the case of flat roofs, and to the average of the height of the gable in the case of pitched roofs.

(14) Grade. "Grade", for buildings adjoining 1 street only, shall be the elevation of the sidewalk at the center of that wall which adjoins the street, except that in case the average elevation of the ground (finished surface) adjacent to the exterior walls of the building is lower than the elevation of the sidewalk, "grade" shall be the average elevation of the ground.

"Grade", for buildings adjoining more than 1 street, shall be the elevation of the sidewalk at the center of the wall adjoining the street having the lowest sidewalk elevation.

"Grade", for buildings having no wall adjoining the street, shall be the average level of the ground (finished surface) adjacent to the exterior walls of the building.

All walls approximately parallel to and not more than 5 feet from a street line shall be considered as adjoining the street. In alleys the surface of the paving shall be considered to be the sidewalk elevation. Where the elevation of the sidewalk or alley paving has not been established the city engineer shall determine such elevation for the purpose of this act.

(15) Occupied spaces. Outside stairways, fire escapes, fire towers, porches, platforms, balconies, boiler flues and other projections shall be considered as part of the building and not as a part of the yards or courts or unoccupied spaces. This provision shall not apply to 1 fireplace or 1 chimney projecting not more than 12 inches into side yard space and not more than 8 feet in length, nor to uninclosed outside porches not exceeding 1 story in height which do not extend into the front or rear yard a greater distance than 12 feet from the front or rear walls of the building, nor to 1 such porch which does not extend into the sideyard a greater distance than 6 feet from the side wall of the building nor exceed 12 feet in its other horizontal dimension, or to cornices not exceeding 16 inches in width including the gutter.

(16) Fireproof dwelling. A "fireproof dwelling" is one the exterior walls of which are constructed of brick, stone, concrete, iron or other hard incombustible material not less than 8 inches thick, and in which there are no wood beams or lintels and in which the floors, roofs, stair halls and public halls are built entirely of brick, stone, concrete, iron or other hard incombustible material, and in which no woodwork or other inflammable material is used in any of the partitions, furrings or ceilings. But this definition shall not be construed as prohibiting elsewhere than in the public halls the use of wooden flooring on top of the fireproof floors or the use of wooden sleepers, nor as prohibiting the use of wood, or any other material not more combustible or inflammable than wood, for handrails, doors, windows, and decorative treatment on incombustible surfaces.

All metallic structural members, except lintels unattached to structural frame work and less than 6 feet in span, shall be protected with not less than 2 inches of brick, concrete, gypsum, terra cotta, or any other material that has equivalent properties to resist the action of flame and heat. Steel in reinforced concrete construction shall be protected with a minimum of 3/4 of an inch of concrete unless additional protection is required by the enforcing official.

In dwellings not over 8 stories in height, steel joists may be used for roof and floor construction if protected on the underside with 3/4 of an inch of gypsum or portland cement plaster on metal lath, thickness of said plaster to be measured from the back of the metal lath, and protected on top with a slab of at least 2 inches of concrete in which wood sleepers may be embedded if there is at least 1 and 1/2 inches of concrete under the sleepers.

(17) Wooden buildings. "Wooden building" is a building of which the exterior walls or a portion thereof are of wood. Court walls are exterior walls.

(18) Nuisance. The word "nuisance" shall be held to embrace public nuisance as known at common law or in equity jurisprudence; and whatever is dangerous to human life or detrimental to health; whatever dwelling is overcrowded with occupants or is not provided with adequate ingress and egress to or from the same, or is not sufficiently supported, ventilated, sewerred, drained, cleaned or lighted, in reference to its intended or actual use; and whatever renders the air or human food or drink unwholesome, are also severally, in contemplation of this act, nuisances; and all such nuisances are hereby declared illegal.

(19) Construction of certain words. The word "shall" is always mandatory and not directory, and denotes that the dwelling shall be maintained in all respects according to the mandate as long as it continues to be a dwelling. Wherever the words "charter," "ordinances," "regulations," "superintendent of buildings," "health department," "the board of health," "health officer," or such other appropriate public official as the mayor may designate "commissioner of public safety," "commissioner of public health," "department charged with the enforcement of this act," "corporation counsel," "mayor," "city treasury," or "fire limits" occur in this act they shall be construed as if followed by the words "of the city or village in which the dwelling is situated." Wherever the words "health department," "health officer," or such other appropriate public official as the mayor may designate, or "duly authorized assistant" or "board of health," "commissioner of public safety," or "commissioner of public health" are employed in this act, such words shall be deemed and construed to mean the official or officials in any city or village to whom is committed the charge of safeguarding the public health. The terms "superintendent of buildings," "building department," and "inspector of buildings" shall embrace the department and the executive head thereof specially charged with the execution of laws and ordinances relating to the construction of buildings. Wherever the terms "superintendent of buildings," "health officer," or such other appropriate public official as the mayor may designate are used in this act they shall be construed to mean the enforcement officials designated in section 111. Wherever the words "occupied" or "used" are employed in this act such words shall be construed as if followed by the words "or is intended, arranged, designed, built, altered, converted to, rented, leased, let or hired out, to be occupied or used." Wherever the words "dwelling," "2 family dwelling," "multiple dwelling," "building," "house," "premises" or "lot" are used in this act, they shall be construed as if followed by the words "or any part thereof." Wherever the words "city water" are used in this act, they shall be construed as meaning any public supply of water through street mains; and wherever the words "public sewer" are used in this act they shall be construed as meaning any part of a system of sewers that is used by the public, whether or not such part was constructed at the public expense. Wherever the word "street" is used in this act it shall be construed as including any public alley 16 feet or more in width. "Approved fireproof material" means as set forth by ordinances, or if not so determined, as approved by the enforcing officer. Where a particular material, device, or type of construction is specified herein, there may be substituted therefor any other material, device or type of construction of a strength, durability, performance and fire resistive qualities, equivalent to the particular material, device or type of construction specified herein, or sufficient for the intended use, and approved as such by the enforcing officer. Perforated gypsum lath 3/8 of an inch thick, with 1/2 inch of gypsum plaster may be substituted wherever metal lath and gypsum or cement plaster is required in this act.

(20) Fire doors. A fire door is a movable fire resistive barrier placed on an opening in a masonry wall or shaft enclosure for the purpose of preventing the passage of fire through the opening. All fire doors, as installed and including frames and hardware shall be capable of passing a fire and water test as herein specified. The fire test shall consist of a flame applied over entire area of door which will gradually raise the temperature of the exposed side to 1400 degrees Fahrenheit during the first 20 minutes of test and which will gradually raise this temperature to 1700 degrees Fahrenheit during the next 40 minutes, concluding the fire test. Immediately thereafter and while the door is still hot, it shall be subjected to the impact of a stream of water under a nozzle pressure of 30 pounds per square inch through a 2 and 1/2 inch fire hose with a 1 and 1/8 inch smooth bore nozzle placed 20 feet from the door and played uniformly over surface of same for a period of at least 45 seconds. To pass this test, a fire door shall maintain its shape and integrity reasonably well so as to be capable of resisting the further application of flame and shall not develop serious structural weakness. The enforcing officer may require that the ability of all fire doors to pass these tests be demonstrated in a recognized testing laboratory, or that satisfactory evidence in the form of a label or certificate of test and inspection be submitted showing that the fire doors in question have successfully complied with these requirements.

All fire doors, except those on dumbwaiters and elevators, shall be of the swinging type and shall not be double acting and shall be equipped with an approved device capable of completely and effectually closing the door under all conditions.

Type "a" fire doors shall be solid without glass panels of any kind. Type "a" fire doors may be used wherever type "b" fire doors are required herein.

Type "b" fire doors may contain not over 720 square inches of wire-glass at least 1/4 inch in thickness.

Automatic fire doors, as specified herein, may be normally held in an open position by an apparatus which will automatically allow the door to close whenever the temperature of the air at the top of the door reaches 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Self-closing fire doors, as specified herein, shall be normally kept closed at all times.

All fire doors shall be equipped with an effective locking device which will hold the door in the closed position but which can be unlocked from either side of the door without the use of a key.

All fire doors shall be provided with an incombustible threshold and combustible floor construction or

covering shall not extend through the door opening.

Frames for type "a" fire doors shall be made entirely of metal and no combustible material shall be used in their construction or installation.

Frames for type "b" fire doors may be made of metal or of wood covered with metal.

Self-closing equipment shall consist of standard door checks or other similar approved devices which will effectually close the door without slamming.

Self-closing fire door shall be labeled on both sides in a conspicuous manner with the following words: "fire door, keep closed".

**History:** 1917, Act 167, Eff. Aug. 10, 1917;—Am. 1921, Act 401, Eff. Aug. 18, 1921;—Am. 1925, Act 371, Eff. Aug. 27, 1925;—CL 1929, 2488;—Am. 1939, Act 303, Eff. Sept. 29, 1939;—CL 1948, 125.402.

#### **125.402a Enforcing agency; definition.**

Sec. 2a. As used in this act:

"Enforcing agency" means the designated officer or agency charged with responsibility for administration and enforcement of this act.

**History:** Add. 1968, Act 286, Eff. Nov. 15, 1968.

#### **125.403-125.406 Repealed. 1972, Act 230, Eff. Jan. 1, 1973.**

**Compiler's note:** The repealed sections pertained to the conversion, alteration, repairing, and moving of dwellings.

#### **125.407 Sewer connections and water supply.**

Sec. 7. Sewer connections and water supply. The provisions of this act with reference to sewer connections and water supply shall be deemed to apply only where connection with a public sewer and with public water mains is or becomes reasonably accessible. All questions of the practicability of such sewer and water connections shall be decided by the health officer, or by such other appropriate public official as the mayor may designate.

**History:** 1917, Act 167, Eff. Aug. 10, 1917;—CL 1929, 2493;—CL 1948, 125.407.

#### **125.408 Minimum requirements; law not to be modified.**

Sec. 8. Minimum requirements; law not to be modified. The provisions of the act shall be held to be the minimum requirements adopted for the protection of health, welfare and safety of the community. Nothing herein contained shall be deemed to invalidate existing ordinances or regulations of any city or organized village or the board of health of any such city or village imposing requirements higher than the minimum requirements laid down in this act relative to light, ventilation, sanitation, fire prevention, egress, occupancy, maintenance and uses for dwellings; nor be deemed to prevent any city or organized village or the board of health of any such city or village from enacting and putting in force from time to time ordinances and regulations imposing requirements higher than the minimum requirements laid down in this act; nor shall anything herein contained be deemed to prevent such cities and organized villages or the board of health of any such city or village from prescribing for the enforcement of such ordinances and regulations, remedies and penalties similar to those prescribed herein. And every such city and organized village or the board of health of any such city or village is empowered to enact such ordinances and regulations and to prescribe for their enforcement. No ordinance, regulation, ruling or decision of any municipal body, officer of authority of the board of health of any such city or village shall repeal, amend, modify or dispense with any of the said minimum requirements laid down in this act; except that, in order that the provisions of this act may be reasonably applied, public health and safety secured, and substantial justice done in instances where practical difficulties are encountered or unnecessary and unreasonable hardship result from the application of the strict letter of the law, the decision of a board of appeals, as hereinafter provided and regulated shall be considered as the reasonable application of the intent of this act.

**History:** 1917, Act 167, Eff. Aug. 10, 1917;—Am. 1925, Act 371, Eff. Aug. 27, 1925;—CL 1929, 2494;—CL 1948, 125.408.

#### **125.409 State board of health; authority.**

Sec. 9. State board of health. The state board of health shall have the power to examine into the enforcement of this act.

**History:** 1917, Act 167, Eff. Aug. 10, 1917;—CL 1929, 2495;—Am. 1939, Act 303, Eff. Sept. 29, 1939;—CL 1948, 125.409.

#### **125.410 Time for compliance.**

Sec. 10. Time for compliance. All improvements specifically required by this act upon dwellings erected prior to the date of its passage shall be made within 1 year from said date, or at such earlier period as may be

fixed by the health officer or other authorized enforcement official.

**History:** 1917, Act 167, Eff. Aug. 10, 1917;—CL 1929, 2496;—Am. 1939, Act 303, Eff. Sept. 29, 1939;—CL 1948, 125.410.

**125.410a Repealed. 1972, Act 230, Eff. Jan. 1, 1973.**

**Compiler's note:** The repealed section pertained to the construction of asylums, jails, and similar institutions.