**An Act To Prevent Homelessness by Establishing the Rental Relief Fund within the Maine State Housing Authority**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec.** **1. 30-A MRSA c. 201, sub-c. 3-C** is enacted to read:

**SUBCHAPTER** **3-C**

**RENTAL RELIEF PROGRAM FOR PERSONS HAVING DIFFICULTY PAYING** **RENT**

**§****4767.** **Rental relief program for persons having difficulty paying rent**

**1.** **Rental subsidy program established.** A rental subsidy program, referred to in this section as "the program," is established within the Maine State Housing Authority. The purpose of the program is to provide rental subsidies to persons having difficulty paying rent.

**2.** **Eligibility.** The Maine State Housing Authority shall determine the eligibility of and provide assistance under the program to a person having difficulty paying rent in the following order of priority:

A. To any person whose personal or financial circumstances have changed as a result of the novel coronavirus disease referred to as COVID-19, including but not limited to a person whose:

(1) Place of employment closed;

(2) Hours of work were reduced;

(3) Child's daycare or school is closed; or

(4) Income is otherwise decreased due to COVID-19; and

B. To any other person who is having difficulty paying rent.

**3.** **Rental subsidy.** A rental subsidy must be provided on behalf of a person eligible for the program pursuant to subsection 2 directly to a landlord by a community action agency as defined in Title 22, section 5321, subsection 2. The Maine State Housing Authority shall adopt rules establishing the amount of the rental subsidy available to a person eligible for the program and the length of time the rental subsidy is available to a person eligible for the program.

**4.** **Fund.** The Rental Relief Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is established as a nonlapsing fund within the Maine State Housing Authority pursuant to the following conditions.

A. All money appropriated for inclusion in the fund pursuant to Title 36, section 4641‑B, subsection 4-B, paragraph H and private donations for the program may be included in the fund.

B. The Maine State Housing Authority may apply money in the fund for purposes authorized by this subchapter.

**5.** **Report.** Beginning January 15, 2022, and annually thereafter, the Maine State Housing Authority shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over housing matters on the program, including the number of persons eligible for the program pursuant to subsection 2 and the number of persons provided rental subsidies under the program pursuant to subsection 3.

**6.** **Rules.** The Maine State Housing Authority shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

**Sec.** **2. 36 MRSA §4641-A, sub-§3** is enacted to read:

**3.** **Surcharge.**  In addition to the tax imposed under subsections 1 and 2, an additional tax in the amount of $2.20 for each $500 or fractional part of $500 of the value of the property transferred as provided in subsection 1 or of the real property owned by the entity and located in this State as provided in subsection 2.

**Sec.** **3. 36 MRSA §4641-B, sub-§4-B, ¶H** is enacted to read:

H. Notwithstanding paragraph F, the Treasurer of State shall credit all revenue derived from the tax imposed by section 4641-A, subsection 3 to the rental relief program for persons having difficulty paying rent established in Title 30-A, chapter 201, subchapter 3-C.

**SUMMARY**

This bill establishes a rental subsidy program within the Maine State Housing Authority for persons experiencing difficulty paying rent. The rental subsidy program provides a rental subsidy on behalf of a person eligible for the program.