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An Act To Ensure the Provision of Housing Navigation Services to Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

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

Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §5106, sub-§13, as amended by PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. BB, §9, is further amended to read:

13. Coordinate activities. Coordinate activities and cooperate with programs in this and other states for the common advancement of programs for Maine's aging population and incapacitated and dependent adults; and

Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §5106, sub-§14-A is enacted to read:

14-A. Housing navigator. Support and maintain a housing navigator under section 5107-K; and

Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §5107-K is enacted to read:

§ 5107-K. Housing navigator

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Home repair, modification and weatherization services" means services, materials and programs available to make a residence safe, warm, dry and efficient, including repairs to the physical structure, the installation of safety equipment, including bathroom grab bars, improved lighting and smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, weatherization services and the installation of energy-efficient lighting fixtures.

B. "Housing navigation assistance" means assistance with:

(1) Finding affordable home repair, modification and weatherization services;

(2) Finding affordable and adequate alternative housing options, including housing with services;

(3) Managing a transition between housing settings; and

(4) Accessing information and resources regarding housing and transitioning housing.

C. "Qualified person" means a person with a disability or a person 60 years of age or older.

2. Housing navigator. There is established within the department the position of housing navigator. The housing navigator:

A. Provides housing navigation assistance to qualified persons;

B. Collaborates with other state agencies, aging and disability service providers and organizations and others to develop, maintain, update and make publicly available information and resources regarding housing navigation assistance; and

C. Identifies gaps in housing assistance needs of qualified persons and periodically submits a report on any gaps to the director of the department's office of aging and disability services for inclusion in the state plan on aging under section 5106, subsection 4.

SUMMARY

This bill creates within the Department of Health and Human Services a housing navigator who:

1. Assists disabled and elderly persons in locating housing, transitioning between housing settings and accessing home repair and home modification services and materials;

2. Maintains and makes publicly available housing assistance information and resources; and

3. Identifies gaps in housing assistance needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities and periodically submits a report on the gaps to the director of the Department of Health and Human Services' office of aging and disability services for inclusion in the state plan on aging.