

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FOUR

—
H.P. 1382 - L.D. 2158

**Resolve, to Improve the Housing Voucher System and Reduce the Number of
Voucher Expirations**

Sec. 1. Maine State Housing Authority to establish stakeholder group.

Resolved: That the Maine State Housing Authority shall establish a stakeholder group to improve the system that governs the distribution and use of housing vouchers. For the purposes of this resolve, "housing voucher" means a tenant-based housing choice voucher issued under Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, Public Law 75-412, 50 Stat. 888, as amended.

Sec. 2. Membership. Resolved: That the membership of the stakeholder group established pursuant to section 1 is as follows:

1. Four members who represent local housing authorities who distribute housing vouchers, including at least 2 members who distribute housing vouchers to be used in rural areas of the State;
2. Four members who provide housing navigation services to tenants who use income-based rental assistance programs, including one member who provides services through a housing authority operated by a federally recognized Indian tribe and one member who provides assistance at homeless shelters;
3. One member who has experience providing legal advice or assistance related to the use of housing vouchers;
4. One member who has experience administering municipal general assistance;
5. The executive director of the Maine Human Rights Commission or the executive director's designee; and
6. Staff from the Maine State Housing Authority with experience in housing voucher distribution and the process for requesting a waiver from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development asking for an adjustment to the fair market rent rate amount used when determining housing voucher amounts.

Sec. 3. Duties. Resolved: That the stakeholder group under section 1 shall:

1. Outline the process for requesting a waiver from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development seeking an increase of the fair market rent for any particular area of the State and, if a waiver is granted, how it allows local housing authorities to enter into contracts with landlords at the highest rent allowed pursuant to that waiver;

2. Determine how many local housing authorities have requested fair market rent waivers from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, how and when each such request was made and the outcome of the requests;

3. Determine how many local housing authorities have not requested fair market rent waivers from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and the reason for each such decision, including the identification of barriers cited by the local housing authorities;

4. Develop a list of all of the programs administered by local housing authorities that create additional housing units, including housing units for which housing vouchers will be used to pay for rent;

5. Consider strategies to support local housing authorities with the submission of United States Department of Housing and Urban Development waiver requests, including using the assistance of the Maine State Housing Authority to assist in administration of that waiver request process;

6. Develop a chart that outlines the rules governing the use of housing vouchers distributed by the Maine State Housing Authority as well as local housing authorities, including but not limited to the time frames associated with securing housing using a housing voucher and housing voucher expiration;

7. Identify any flexibility that exists regarding the distribution and use of housing vouchers, including but not limited to the time frame within which a housing voucher must be used prior to its expiration and the ability to use a housing voucher in an area of the State outside of the area for which it was issued;

8. Consider strategies to improve outreach and education to landlords with the goal of increasing the number of landlords who accept tenants who use housing vouchers or other income-based rental assistance; and

9. Make recommendations, excluding the development of more housing stock, to maximize the acceptance of housing vouchers by landlords and increase flexibility in the use of housing vouchers, including but not limited to housing voucher expiration, submitting United States Department of Housing and Urban Development waiver requests and amendments to rules of the Maine State Housing Authority.

Sec. 4. Report. Resolved: That, no later than January 15, 2025, the Maine State Housing Authority shall submit a report on the findings and recommendations of the stakeholder group under section 1 to the joint select or joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over housing matters. The committee receiving the report is authorized to submit legislation based on the report to the 132nd Legislature in 2025.