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No. 473

H.P. 347

House of Representatives, February 16, 2021

An Act To Create the Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program

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ROBERT B. HUNT Clerk

R(+ B. Hunt

Presented by Representative MORALES of South Portland.

1	Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:
2	Sec. 1. 30-A MRSA c. 201, sub-c. 14 is enacted to read:
3	SUBCHAPTER 14
4	MAINE RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND VOUCHER GUARANTEE PROGRAM
5	§4994-A. Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program
6 7 8 9 10	The Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program, referred to in this section as "the program," is established within the Maine State Housing Authority. The program must include a rental assistance component to assist individuals with the cost of rent and a rental voucher guarantee component to encourage landlords to work with the program and other rental assistance programs in the State.
11 12	1. Rental assistance. The rental assistance component of the program must be administered in accordance with this subsection.
13 14 15	A. The Maine State Housing Authority shall establish and administer eligibility criteria and application requirements for tenants or prospective tenants to participate in the program.
16 17 18	B. Rental assistance payments for program participants must be paid from the fund established in section 4994-B directly to the landlord of the participant or to a property management company designated by the landlord.
19 20	C. A landlord may receive rental assistance payments under the program only if the landlord agrees to:
21 22	(1) Exclude credit score, rental history and last month's rent from the rental application;
23 24 25 26	(2) Work with individuals referred to as "housing navigators" affiliated with housing authorities, general assistance programs or nonprofit organizations who assist tenants with locating housing and the rental process and who provide mentoring services to promote successful landlord-tenant relationships;
27 28	(3) Waive tenant late fees for any month in which rental assistance is paid by the program; and
29 30	(4) Not evict a program participant for nonpayment of rent during any month for which rental assistance is paid.
31 32	2. Rental voucher guarantee. The rental voucher guarantee component of the program must be administered in accordance with this subsection.
33 34 35 36 37	A. The purpose of the rental voucher guarantee program component is to encourage landlords to work with the program and other rental assistance programs available in the State, including but not limited to rental assistance programs administered by or available through the Maine State Housing Authority, local housing authorities, other state and local agencies federal agencies municipalities or tribal governments

1 B. The Maine State Housing Authority shall annually dedicate \$1,000,000 of the fund 2 established in section 4994-B for the rental voucher guarantee component of the 3 program. These funds may be used as follows: (1) To hire individuals referred to as "housing navigators" affiliated with local 4 housing authorities, general assistance programs or nonprofit organizations to 5 assist tenants with locating housing, to assist with the rental process and to provide 6 mentoring services to promote successful landlord-tenant relationships; 7 8 (2) To provide a letter of credit to landlords who enter into a 12-month rental 9 agreement with a person receiving rental assistance through a municipal general assistance program under Title 22, chapter 1161. The letter of credit must guarantee 10 up to one month of rental assistance and verified property damages, not to exceed 11 \$2,000, in the event the tenancy is unsuccessful: 12 13 (3) To expand the availability of programs that assist landlords who participate in 14 rental assistance programs available in the State, as described in paragraph A, with mitigation and repair of damages to units, mitigation of lost funds due to unpaid 15 16 rent and tenant payment of security deposits; and 17 (4) To connect landlords with resources for the abatement of lead paint hazards in 18 residential housing. 19 **3. Rules.** The Maine State Housing Authority may adopt rules to implement this 20 section. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in 21 Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. 22 §4994-B. Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program Fund 23 The Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program Fund, referred to in this 24 section as "the fund," is established within the Maine State Housing Authority. The Maine 25 State Housing Authority may apply money in the fund for purposes authorized by this 26 subchapter. 27 Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and 28 allocations are made. 29 HOUSING AUTHORITY, MAINE STATE 30 Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program Fund 31 Initiative: Provides ongoing funds to establish and implement the Maine Rental Assistance 32 and Voucher Guarantee Program under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 30-A, chapter 33 201, subchapter 14. 34 **GENERAL FUND** 2021-22 2022-23 35 All Other \$8,500,000 \$8,500,000 36 37 \$8,500,000 \$8,500,000 GENERAL FUND TOTAL 38 **SUMMARY** 39 This bill requires the Maine State Housing Authority to establish and administer the 40 Maine Rental Assistance and Voucher Guarantee Program. The program must include a rental assistance component to assist individuals with the cost of rent and a rental voucher 41

- guarantee component to encourage landlords to work with the program and other rental assistance programs in the State. The bill also creates the Maine Rental Assistance and 1
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- Voucher Guarantee Program Fund under the Maine State Housing Authority to carry out the program. The bill includes a General Fund appropriation of \$8,500,000 to the fund in 3
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- fiscal year 2021-22 and fiscal year 2022-23. 5