

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

Sec. 1. 30-A MRSA c. 201, sub-c. 14 is enacted to read:

#### SUBCHAPTER 14

### MAINE RENTAL ASSISTANCE ~~AND VOUCHER GUARANTEE~~ GUARANTEE PROGRAM

#### §4994-A. Maine Rental Assistance ~~and Voucher Guarantee~~ Guarantee Program

The Maine Rental Assistance ~~and Voucher Guarantee~~ Guarantee Program, referred to in this section as "the program," is established within the Maine State Housing Authority. The program ~~provides~~ must include a rental assistance ~~component~~ to assist ~~tenants~~ individuals with the cost of rent and a ~~rental voucher~~ guarantee ~~component program~~ to encourage landlords to work with ~~the program and other~~ rental assistance programs in the State.

**1. Rental assistance.** The rental assistance ~~component of the~~ program must be administered in accordance with this subsection.

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.

B. ~~The Authority may use any funds made available for the program. For Fiscal Years 2021-22 and 22-23, the rental assistance provided under the Program may be provided through federal funds allocated for Emergency Rental Assistance under the Federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 with all eligibility criteria for rental assistance consistent with federal guidelines issued by the Department of Treasury.~~

~~C. Beginning in Fiscal Year 23-24, Maine State Housing Authority shall present to the Maine Legislature a report and request for funds if needed to provide rental assistance to a minimum of 1,000 households who are currently ineligible for or on the waitlist for other rental assistance programs or the number of households on the Maine Centralized Section 8 waitlist at the time of the report, whichever is greater. . . At a minimum the report to the Maine Legislature shall provide the number of households currently on the Maine Centralized Section 8 Waitlist and the amount of funds needed to provide every household on the waitlist with a state funded voucher.~~

~~C. 2. Housing Navigation and Rental voucher Guarantee Program.~~ The ~~housing navigation and rental voucher~~ guarantee ~~component of the~~ program must be administered in accordance with this subsection.

A. The ~~purpose of the~~ Housing Navigation and ~~Rental Voucher~~ Guarantee program ~~component~~ is to assist tenants with locating housing, obtaining rental assistance, and applying for rental housing; to provide supportive services to promote successful landlord-tenant

~~relationships; and to~~ encourage landlords to work with 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, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, local housing authorities, other state and local agencies, federal agencies, municipalities or tribal governments.

B. The ~~Maine State Housing~~ Authority shall annually ~~dedicate~~ provide at least \$1,500,000 of ~~the available~~ funds ~~established~~ provided in section 4994-B for the ~~housing navigation and rental voucher~~ guarantee ~~component of the~~ program. These funds may be used ~~as follows:~~

(1) To hire ~~individuals referred to as~~ "housing navigators" affiliated with local housing authorities, general assistance programs, or nonprofit organizations to assist tenants with locating housing ~~and~~ the rental application process and to provide supportive ~~services~~ to promote successful landlord-tenant relationships;

(2) To set aside funds to ~~provide a rental voucher~~ guarantee ~~certain payments~~ to landlords who enter into a 12-month rental agreement with a person receiving rental assistance. The guarantee may pay for verified losses including unpaid rents and property damages, not to exceed \$5,000, in the event the tenancy is unsuccessful;

(3) To ~~expand the availability of programs that~~ assist tenants who participate in ~~any rental assistance~~ the program ~~available in the State~~, with the ~~payment of~~ security deposits;

~~(4) and To provide~~ grants up to \$5,000 for necessary repairs to pass rental assistance program inspection requirements; and

~~(5) To connect~~ refer landlords ~~with to~~ resources for the abatement of lead paint hazards in residential housing ~~if needed~~.

C. A landlord may ~~receive~~ participate in the ~~rental voucher~~ guarantee ~~program under the~~ program only if the landlord agrees to:

(1) ~~work with the Housing Navigation and Rental Voucher Guarantee program~~ ~~component prior to entering~~ enter into a ~~12-month~~ lease agreement with a tenant who pays rent in whole or in part through a rental assistance program;

(2) ~~Exclude~~ not consider the tenant's criminal record, credit score, and rental history and ~~to~~ waive application fees and ~~to not require the~~ last month's rent ~~in advance~~ from the rental application;

(3) Waive tenant late fees for any month in which rental assistance is paid by the program, ~~and~~

~~(4) Not evict a program participant for nonpayment of rent during any month for which rental assistance is paid. The landlord is (not?) entitled to seek unpaid rent from the tenant for that month.~~

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

**4. Reporting.** On a biannual basis:

A. Maine Housing shall report ~~Biannually~~ to the Labor and Housing Committee by county on the number of households assisted with housing navigation, the number of security deposits paid, and the number of landlords who have accessed funds under the program.

B. Beginning in Fiscal Year 23-24, Maine State Housing Authority shall present to the Maine Legislature a report and request for funds to provide rental assistance to (i) a minimum of 1,000 households who are currently ineligible for or on the waitlist for other rental assistance programs, (ii) the number of households on the Maine Centralized Section 8 waitlist at the time of the report, and (iii) sustain the prospective rental assistance (excluding arrears payments) provided through the Maine Housing Emergency Rental Assistance Program for the preceding year. At a minimum the report to the Maine Legislature shall provide the number of households currently on the Maine Centralized Section 8 Waitlist and the amount of funds needed to provide every household on the waitlist with a state funded voucher.

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#### **§4994-B. Maine Rental Assistance and ~~Voucher~~ Guarantee Program Fund**

The Maine Rental Assistance and ~~Voucher~~ Guarantee Program Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," is established within the ~~Maine State Housing~~ Authority. The ~~Maine State Housing~~ Authority may apply money in the fund for purposes authorized by this subchapter.

**Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and allocations are made.

##### **HOUSING AUTHORITY, MAINE STATE**

##### **Maine Rental Assistance and ~~Voucher~~ Guarantee Program Fund**

Initiative: Provides ongoing funds to establish and implement the Maine Rental Assistance and ~~Voucher~~ Guarantee Program under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 30-A, chapter 201, subchapter 14.

##### **GENERAL FUND**

All Other

37 GENERAL FUND TOTAL

**2021-22**

\$94,050,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$94,050,000

**2022-23**

\$94,050,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$94,050,000

38 34

**SUMMARY**

This bill requires the Maine State Housing Authority to establish and administer the Maine Rental Assistance and ~~Voucher~~ Guarantee Program. The program ~~provides must include a rental assistance component~~ to assist ~~qualified individuals-tenants~~ with the cost of rent and a ~~rental voucher~~ guarantee ~~program 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 ~~Voucher~~ Guarantee Program Fund under the Maine State Housing Authority to carry out the program. The bill includes an ~~ongoing~~ General Fund appropriation of \$~~18~~,500,000 ~~to the fund in fiscal year 2021-22 and fiscal year 2022-23~~ per year.