



130th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2021

Legislative Document

No. 473

H.P. 347

House of Representatives, February 16, 2021

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

Received by the Clerk of the House on February 11, 2021. Referred to the Committee on Labor and Housing pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 401.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

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

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

13 A. The Maine State Housing Authority shall establish and administer eligibility criteria
14 and application requirements for tenants or prospective tenants to participate in the
15 program.

16 B. Rental assistance payments for program participants must be paid from the fund
17 established in section 4994-B directly to the landlord of the participant or to a property
18 management company designated by the landlord.

19 C. A landlord may receive rental assistance payments under the program only if the
20 landlord agrees to:

21 (1) Exclude credit score, rental history and last month's rent from the rental
22 application;

23 (2) Work with individuals referred to as "housing navigators" affiliated with
24 housing authorities, general assistance programs or nonprofit organizations who
25 assist tenants with locating housing and the rental process and who provide
26 mentoring services to promote successful landlord-tenant relationships;

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

29 (4) Not evict a program participant for nonpayment of rent during any month for
30 which rental assistance is paid.

31 **2. Rental voucher guarantee.** The rental voucher guarantee component of the
32 program must be administered in accordance with this subsection.

33 A. The purpose of the rental voucher guarantee program component is to encourage
34 landlords to work with the program and other rental assistance programs available in
35 the State, including but not limited to rental assistance programs administered by or
36 available through the Maine State Housing Authority, local housing authorities, other
37 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:

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

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
10 assistance program under Title 22, chapter 1161. The letter of credit must guarantee
11 up to one month of rental assistance and verified property damages, not to exceed
12 \$2,000, in the event the tenancy is unsuccessful;

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
15 mitigation and repair of damages to units, mitigation of lost funds due to unpaid
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 GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$8,500,000</u>	<u>\$8,500,000</u>

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
41 rental assistance component to assist individuals with the cost of rent and a rental voucher

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