

2022 -- S 2859

LC005645

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND HOUSING
RESOURCES ACT OF 1998

Introduced By: Senators Kallman, Cano, Burke, Mendes, Bell, Mack, Acosta, Lombardo,
Gallo, and Goodwin

Date Introduced: April 05, 2022

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 42-128 of the General Laws entitled "Rhode Island Housing
2 Resources Act of 1998" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **42-128-8.2. Emergency housing assistance.**

4 (a) The Rhode Island housing resources commission shall administer a program of
5 emergency housing assistance to needy families with children and pregnant woman with no other
6 children. The commission shall administer the program throughout the state at locations that are
7 geographically convenient to families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and shall
8 administer the program in a fair, just and equitable manner. The state shall accept funds from the
9 appropriate federal authorities for said program.

10 (b) The commission shall promulgate rules and regulations to establish the levels of
11 benefits available under the program and to ensure simplicity of administration in the best interest
12 of needy recipients. Such benefits shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

13 (1) For the prevention of the loss of housing, the actual liability up to three (3) times the
14 monthly rental or mortgage liability;

15 (2) For the prevention of utility shutoffs or for the resumption of utility services, up to three
16 (3) months of the actual service liabilities;

17 (3) For the provision of home heating assistance, up to three (3) months of the actual fuel
18 liabilities;

1 (4) The commission shall promulgate regulations which would authorize the commission
2 to make payments for a fourth month of rent, utility or fuel arrearages if the director certifies in
3 writing that the family would otherwise become homeless, or be without utilities or fuel;

4 (5) For the prevention of homelessness, temporary shelter as necessary to alleviate
5 homelessness when such family has no feasible alternative housing available, storage of furniture
6 for up to thirty (30) days; moving expenses; advance rent payments of one month's rent; and
7 security deposit not to exceed one month's rent.

8 (c) The commission shall establish procedures, consistent with federal law, to require
9 applicants for the program to also submit an application for federal energy assistance where
10 appropriate. No benefits for a particular emergency shall be provided to an applicant family under
11 the emergency assistance program when benefits are available within seven (7) days of application
12 under the federal assistance program to meet such particular emergency.

13 (d) The commission shall promulgate rules and regulations to establish the requirements
14 and standards for eligibility.

15 (e) Emergency housing assistance shall be denied to a family who, at any time within one
16 year immediately prior to the filing of an application for emergency assistance, has depleted,
17 assigned or transferred real or personal property that would have rendered such family ineligible
18 for assistance if the depletion, transfer or assignment was not reasonable at the time or was not for
19 good cause reasons. For purposes of the preceding sentence, good cause reasons shall include, but
20 not be limited to, that the funds were expended for necessary or reasonable costs of living such as
21 rent, utilities, food, health related needs, education related expenses or transportation.

22 (f) The commission shall take all reasonable actions to minimize abuse and errors. Such
23 activities shall include:

24 (1) The collection and analysis of data regarding utilization patterns;

25 (2) The recording and tracking of use of this program by individual recipients, including,
26 but not limited to, the utilization of a year to year cross check of recipients to determine if a person
27 or persons has received similar benefits in the previous year or years;

28 (3) The utilization by the commission of mechanisms, such as payment of all or part of a
29 regular assistance grant directly to vendors, to prevent the misuse of this program, provided,
30 however, that such mechanisms are authorized under federal or state law;

31 (4) The utilization of wage reporting and bank matching systems; provided, however, that
32 the provision of assistance shall not be delayed by such utilization;

33 (5) The verification of all elements of eligibility. Such verification requirements, including
34 home visits by workers assigned to recipients, shall be reasonable and in accordance with federal

1 law and regulations, where applicable. The commission shall determine which verification
2 requirements can be reasonably met by third-party affidavits and shall provide notification to
3 recipients and applicants of the circumstances when third-party affidavits may be used. The
4 commission shall establish reasonable procedures for the verification of continuing eligibility,
5 including monthly reporting and retrospective budgeting where appropriate.

6 (g) Any person or institution which knowingly makes a false representation or, contrary to
7 a legal duty to do so, knowingly fails to disclose any material fact affecting eligibility or level of
8 benefits to the commission or its agents, for the purpose of causing any person, including the person
9 making such representations, to be eligible for emergency housing assistance, shall be punished by
10 a fine of not less than two hundred dollars (\$200) nor more than five hundred dollars (\$500) or by
11 imprisonment for not more than one year.

12 Nothing in this section shall be construed as preventing the institution of criminal
13 proceedings for the violation of any other law of the State of Rhode Island.

14 (h) Any vendor under the emergency housing assistance program administered by the
15 commission shall submit to the commission, within six (6) months of the last day of the month in
16 which such service was rendered, a bill for the same. For the purposes of this chapter a vendor shall
17 be any person or institution providing services in connection with any assistance program
18 administered by the commission. All vouchers submitted by a vendor shall be signed under the
19 penalties of perjury.

20 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND HOUSING
RESOURCES ACT OF 1998

- 1 This act would create a program for emergency housing assistance to needy families with
- 2 children and pregnant woman with no other children through the Rhode Island housing resources
- 3 commission.
- 4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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