

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from electronic originals
(may include minor formatting differences from printed original)



131st Maine Legislature

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

L.D. 2158

A Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic
Development, 132nd Maine Legislature, January 2025

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Task Force.....	4
Meetings	5
About the Housing Choice Voucher Program.....	5
Project-Based Vouchers and Housing Choice Vouchers	5
Maine’s Voucher Issuers	6
How are Vouchers Allocated?.....	6
Resolve Questions	8
Appendices.....	18
A: Maine Section 8 Income Limit Table	
B: Budget Authority and Percentage in Use, by PHA	
C: Survey Responses	

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

Introduction

L.D. 2158 specified 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. In this report, "Section Eight," "Housing Choice Vouchers" and "Vouchers" are different references to the same thing.

Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers are the United States' primary rental assistance program. This program is funded through the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which, as of late 2024, is leasing 2,334,928 units nationwide, at a total annual cost of \$22.23 billion.

In Maine, there are currently 12,179 vouchers in use, distributed through nineteen public housing authorities and MaineHousing. Each housing authority provides vouchers within a specific geographical area, while MaineHousing serves as the public housing authority for those localities and towns that do not have a designated public housing authority of their own.

Statewide, the cost to provide those vouchers is \$128,062,000 per year, all of which is paid by the federal government. The state is currently spending 106.4% of its budgetary authority. Reasons for this situation are explored below in the section titled "2024 Voucher Pause."

Vouchers are administered nationwide through public housing authorities (PHAs). These vouchers are designed to provide monthly rental payments to landlords in an amount tied to a tenant household's income. Typically, the tenant pays 30%-40% of their household income towards rent, and the voucher provides the rest. The payment standard sets the maximum subsidy payment a household can receive from the PHA each month. Payment standards are based on the Fair Market Rent (FMR) rate published annually by HUD.

FMRs are set at a percentile within the rent distribution of standard quality rental housing in each FMR area. The PHA's board is required to set a payment standard schedule within a "basic range" established by HUD – between 90% and 110% of the published FMR for each unit size. In places experiencing significant increases in the level of typical rents, FMRs can fall behind the market, causing the vouchers to be less competitive with landlords. In those cases, PHA's have some latitude to set payment standards above FMR's, but doing so requires they undertake a complex and costly survey process that is discussed on page 8.

This report is the product of a task force that convened over the course of the late summer and fall of 2024 to discuss the Section 8 voucher program as it is operated in Maine, and to look at potential improvements to how those vouchers should be used. The task force work was based around the discussions of specific questions provided by L.D. 2158.

Task Force

MaineHousing worked with the Maine Association of Public Housing Directors (“MAPHD”) to identify members of the task force as required by the resolve.

Public Housing Authority Members:

Stacey Michaud	Housing Authority of Fort Fairfield
Chris Kilmurry	Lewiston Housing Authority
Weston Brehm	Ellsworth and Mount Desert Island Housing Authorities
Leanna Bruce	South Portland Housing Authority

Housing Navigators:

Hon. Victoria Morales	Quality Housing Coalition
Emily Flinkstrom	Fair Tide
Marcie Dean	Next Step Domestic Violence Project
Leanne Pomeroy	Preble Street

Tribal Member:

Janelle Sapiel	Passamaquoddy Tribal Housing Authority
----------------	--

Maine Human Rights Commission:

Kit Thomson Crossman	Executive Director
----------------------	--------------------

Person with experience in General Assistance:

Elaine Brackett	of Lewiston
-----------------	-------------

Legal Aid Provider:

Frank D’Alessandro	Maine Equal Justice
--------------------	---------------------

Maine Housing Staff:

Erik Jorgensen	Sr. Director of Government Relations and Comms.
Allison Gallagher	Director of Housing Choice Voucher Dept.
Jonny Kurzfeld	Director of Planning and Research
Lauren Bustard	Sr. Director of Homeless Initiatives
Jamie Johnson	Sr. Director of Operations

Meetings

The full task force met three times remotely to address the questions posed in the resolve. These meetings took place on September 24th, October 21st and December 16th. In addition, a survey of all of Maine’s public housing authorities was conducted in late November, and a “steering committee” comprised of Erik Jorgensen of MaineHousing, Stacy Michaud of the Housing Authority of Fort Fairfield, and Chris Kilmurry of the Lewiston Housing Authority met periodically to discuss data gathering, logistics and other issues relating to the project.

About the Housing Choice Voucher Program

The purpose of the Housing Choice Voucher program is to aid extremely and very low income households, the disabled, and the elderly in finding affordable housing. At least 75% of all vouchers issued by a housing authority must be targeted to extremely low-income households, whose total income does not exceed 30% of the area median income.

For example, a four- person household in Portland would be earning \$35,500 or less to meet that criterion, based on the current income limits established for Maine by HUD, shown in *Appendix A*.

Maine currently reports that there are 12,179 units statewide leased through vouchers. About 2/3 of Maine’s vouchers are administered by local housing authorities; the remaining 1/3 (for parts of the state without local housing authorities) are provided under the auspices of MaineHousing.

Maine is allotted a certain number of vouchers as well as a certain amount of funding to pay for them. As noted above, vouchers are designed so all tenants pay 30-40% of their monthly income toward rent. Therefore, the lower a voucher holder’s income, the more the voucher costs the housing authority. This often means that it is impossible to fund all the vouchers that have been authorized.

Sometimes vouchers go unused when a voucher holder searches for but cannot find affordable housing. The notion of “unused vouchers” can be misleading. Virtually all the vouchers for which funding is available, or for which units are available, are currently leased, or they have been issued to eligible families as they search for housing.

In addition to Housing Choice Vouchers, there are additional vouchers in two transitional housing programs. These are provided through BRAP (the Bridging Rental Assistance Program, administered by Maine’s DHHS), which is focused on persons with mental illness, including substance abuse disorder, and Stability Through Engagement Program (STEP), MaineHousing’s short-term rental assistance program aimed at getting individuals and families out of homelessness.

Project-Based Vouchers and Housing Choice Vouchers

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) funding is tenant-based and provides the family flexibility to choose housing that best meets their needs. If a tenant needs to move, for example, to a building with an elevator or to a location closer to a job or family, the voucher will travel with them. Housing

authorities administering a HCV program are provided the option to project-base (PBV) a percentage of their voucher allocation. Project-based vouchers are associated with a particular housing complex and stay with the apartment, while Housing Choice Vouchers go with the tenant and are portable.

If a tenant in good standing moves from a project-based voucher unit and is still eligible for participation in the voucher program, the tenant can be issued a tenant-based (Housing Choice) voucher. In this way the project-based voucher “splits;” it remains in effect at the original unit while also being available to the tenant for a future unit, assuming the housing authority has vouchers available. It is important to note that while this results in a new voucher, it comes with no increase in funding.

Maine’s Voucher Issuers

Vouchers in Maine are issued under the auspices of twenty housing agencies. Local public housing authorities participating in the program issue vouchers within their own geographical areas, while MaineHousing issues vouchers in those parts of the state that do not have local PHAs. Budgetary authority represents the funding allocated by HUD to the local PHA and is a proportion of the state’s total allocation of funding as determined by HUD. HUD publishes an extensive [public-facing voucher dashboard](#) that tracks each state and local voucher issuer across the country. Each PHA’s total budget authority and the percentage of that budget authority currently in use at the end of 2024 can be found in *Appendix B*.

How are Vouchers Allocated?

Anyone applying for a housing choice voucher in Maine is placed on the Centralized Wait List, a tool created by statute and adopted in 2017, eliminating the need for local wait lists at different housing authorities. Applicants in Maine on the Housing Choice Voucher wait list can face a wait time of more than five years. This wait time is consistent with the HCV programs across the country and the need for vouchers nationally always exceeds their availability. In many jurisdictions, the wait lists have grown so lengthy that they are not accepting new applicants.

Housing authorities administering HCV programs may establish priorities or preferences to serve certain populations more quickly. For example, MaineHousing has established a preference for veterans. Other PHAs may have a preference for residents from their jurisdictions, so even though there is a single wait list, different PHA’s may draw names in a different order depending on these preferences. In addition to the “very low income” threshold, applicants must have legal immigration status, be able to pass a background check, and not owe money to a housing authority for earlier unpaid rent.

Voucher holders, like other tenants, are required to pay rent and abide by the normal rules of tenancy, whether they are renting from a housing authority or a private landlord. Voucher holders who have extended trouble finding a unit may have a negative rental history. When layering those factors onto the overall scarcity of available units in a state with a very low vacancy rate, many voucher holders have an especially difficult time finding housing.

In addition to income and citizenship/legal residence requirements, there are also two blanket disqualifications that prevent a household from receiving a voucher: households containing either lifetime sex offenders or persons convicted of producing or selling methamphetamine in a federally subsidized housing facility are categorically denied.

2024 Voucher Pause

An important contextual consideration for this report is that Maine as a state is currently at 106.4% of its budget authority. A few smaller housing authorities are below 100%, but all of the larger ones, including MaineHousing, are above 100%.

When this condition exists for an extended period, HUD instructs PHAs to stop issuing new vouchers until enough vouchers are returned to circulation to bring the budget back below 100%. Housing authorities generally aim to use 98% of their budgetary authority; this assures that almost all the money is committed, while allowing for a minimal buffer to meet the needs of people searching for housing.

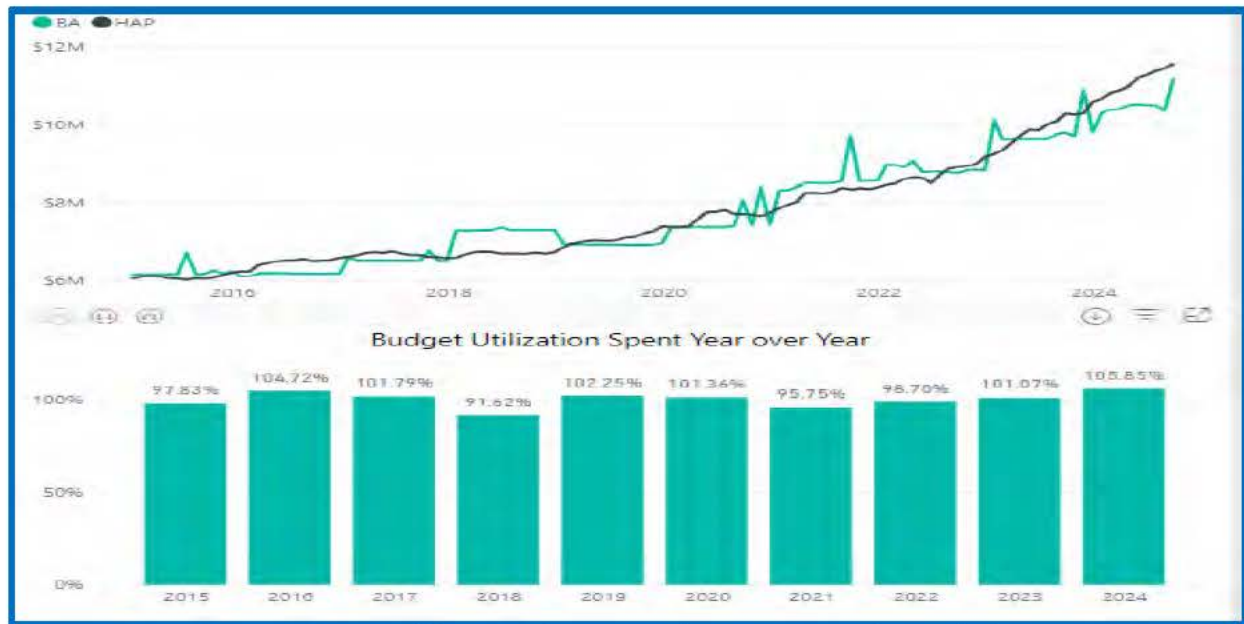
The chief driver of this funding allocation situation is that a voucher issuer does not know what a voucher will cost until a lease is signed. Where rent is rising quickly, or if a program is renting to people with lower incomes, each voucher costs more. MaineHousing, for example, has a priority in its vouchers for people experiencing homelessness. They often have little or no income, so when individuals holding those vouchers enter a rental lease (“lease up”), each voucher costs proportionally more as it covers a greater portion of the rent.

As 2024 ended, Maine exceeded its budgetary authority for the year. This is not the result of mismanagement, but a factor relating to the rising cost of rent and a higher-than-usual degree of success by tenants in getting landlords to accept vouchers.

The voucher pause does not affect households who have vouchers currently, Maine has not closed the wait list (which some states do), and this freeze does not affect project-based vouchers that are connected to buildings.

The voucher situation in Maine mirrors that in the nation as a whole. This was described in a HUD funding message to program administrators dated December 6, 2024. It noted that “Over the past two years, PHAs have experienced an unprecedented increase in voucher Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) costs, which most PHAs to date have been able to address through a combination of existing program reserves and new funding. As a result, many PHAs will enter 2025 with very limited program reserves, and the availability and amount of future shortfall funding from HUD is uncertain.” This message went on to say that large future funding increases for the HCV program are not likely, given budget proposals currently being debated in the US Congress.

The graphic below shows the relationship over time for Maine’s housing authorities between budget authority (how much money is available) shown in aqua and HAP payments (rental assistance being paid) in black. Where the black line rises above the aqua line, budget authority has been exceeded.



Source: HUD Voucher Dashboard, Maine https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/dashboard

Resolve Questions

At the heart of L.D. 2158 was a series of nine questions which the task force addressed during its meetings. These questions focused on Fair Market Rent Waivers, voucher expiration and search time, and recommendations for improving the voucher system statewide. The following section addresses those questions.

The first three questions relate to the process of seeking and using FMR waivers from HUD. Waiver-specific questions were answered through both task force discussion and through a survey instrument that was distributed to the directors of all public housing authorities in Maine.

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.

Re-evaluation of FMRs is a process outlined in HUD rules and federal law. PHAs may request a reevaluation of their published applicable FMR following the procedures established in an annual Federal Register notice typically is published in August. While the procedures are subject to change each year, typically the reevaluation procedures require:

- A. The area's PHA, or in multi-jurisdictional areas, PHAs, representing at least half the voucher tenants in the FMR area, must agree that the reevaluation is necessary.
- B. The requester must supply HUD with data more recent than that found in the American Community Survey (ACS) data used in the calculation of the applicable year's existing FMRs.

HUD requires the submission of data on gross rents paid in the area for occupied standard quality rental housing units. Occupied recent mover units provide the best data, and the data delivered must be sufficient for HUD to calculate a 40th and 50th percentile two-bedroom gross rent. If this data is not available, requestors may gather this information using their own surveys, under guidance which can be found at

www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/PrinciplesforPHA-ConductedAreaRentSurveys.pdf

FMR reevaluation are based on surveys that require complex data gathering protocols. The process requires that surveys include outreach both by cell phone and mail, based upon samples of specific survey procedures and questions provided by HUD at the guidance link.

A request for reevaluation requires the submission of newly collected rental data, gathered in a statistically random way that is representative of the entire market area so that this new data can be used to replace the ACS Census data FMRs in place. A minimum of 100 completed valid surveys is required, whether for small metropolitan areas of less than 20,000 rental units (this is a HUD term – most metro areas in Maine fall into this category), individual non-metro counties, or non-metro county groups. Most large metropolitan areas are expected to collect up to 200 survey responses. Chris Kilmurray noted that outside of the Portland metro area, PHA's struggle to get this level of survey response due to lower unit density and the total number units available for inclusion in the survey.

Valid surveys must be of 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units only that were not built in the past two years. The tenant must reside in the unit all year, the unit may not be owned by a relative, the tenant may not do work for the landlord in exchange for a rent reduction, and the rent must be the same all year long. In addition, the tenant must not participate in a government housing program, have a voucher, or certify income annually to be a valid survey result

Surveys designed to meet this threshold are expensive, and as HUD's own cost of conducting these surveys increased from about \$25,000 per survey to over \$75,000 per survey, the expense of gathering FMR data became unsustainable. HUD now relies more heavily on the American Community Survey (ACS) to set FMR levels. Because the ACS provides two-bedroom gross rent data for recent movers for larger metropolitan areas every year, albeit with a three-year lag, HUD intended to continue to have money available to survey smaller areas, but sequestration forced cuts, and consequently, as noted in the guidance link, HUD does not have the money to fund local area surveys.

Due to the complexity and cost of the FMR reevaluation process, PHAs in Maine who seek reevaluations generally hire consultants to perform this work on their behalf.

As noted elsewhere in this report, if an FMR reevaluation is successful, the PHA does not receive additional budget authority from HUD, but simply has the ability to move to a higher HAP payment standard, resulting in fewer vouchers the PHA can issue.

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.

The task force spent much of its first two meetings discussing waivers, the mechanics of applying for those waivers, and the overall strategic advisability of seeking waivers. As noted earlier, Maine is currently above 100% of its budget authority, which means two things: first, it is implicit that voucher holders have been successful in making use of their vouchers, and second, that many housing authorities are spending above their allocated budgets to support the vouchers in the state. Virtually all the funding is in use, and all the vouchers that can be paid for are in use. This state of overspending is why many PHAs in Maine (like others around the country) are in a funding pause.

There was widespread agreement in the task force that the cost of undertaking a waiver increase request was very high. Chris Kilmurray noted that a single request can cost up to \$60,000 paid to a consultant. It is “an expensive and complicated process that is not guaranteed to get results.” Additionally, particularly for a small housing authority where vouchers are highly utilized, a waiver might simply increase competition for available housing.

Several task force members also questioned the value of FMR increase in general. One theme that was cited by many of the PHA members was that when FMRs increase, either as the result of a waiver or through an increase coming from HUD, there is often a general increase in all rents in an area to match the increase in Section 8 payment standards. More sophisticated landlords will explicitly tie their rents to FMRs. According to one director, “around 50% of landlords in [his] jurisdiction will request rent increases as soon as an FMR increase takes place.” Elaine Brackett commented that this is a phenomenon that also affects GA departments: “When news of an FMR increase comes out, the landlords go immediately to the maximum FMR, which really hurts those renters who rely on General Assistance.” Victoria Morales added that FMRs are above the current maximum payments for GA.

This effect is especially problematic when a PHA is above the total budget utilization, as so many are now. There was a question about whether HUD would look favorably upon increasing FMR’s when all vouchers are in use, even if an issuer went through the process of requesting a waiver.

Another issue with increased payment standards is that with higher payments, fewer vouchers can be issued and fewer apartment units subsidized. This means fewer people are served. This effect is exacerbated when a housing authority focuses on people with the greatest need with such a focus (such as MaineHousing’s priority to serve people experiencing homelessness) that there are more tenants with extremely low or no income, which means that each voucher uses a higher percentage of available funding; therefore, fewer vouchers get issued.

Another side effect worth noting is that a public housing authority is paid administrative fees based on the number of units that it leases. With fewer units being leased, which happens when there are higher voucher costs, PHAs lose administrative funds, which are scarce to begin with. This is not a reason to shy away from requesting FMR increases, but it is a factor and something to consider when thinking about the overall health of PHAs.

Several task force members who are not from housing authorities did feel that having higher FMR and therefore higher payment standards would be very helpful. Marcie Dean noted that “as an agency that uses vouchers and has difficulty finding landlords or property management that accepts Housing Choice/Section 8 vouchers specifically, we have voiced often that the fair market rate does not match the rent being asked for units in our area, especially that of Washington County, which has a payment standard of \$826 for a one-bedroom unit.”

Emily Flinkstrom and Leanne Pomeroy noted that vouchers present barriers to both landlords and renters. For renters, there is the constant challenge of finding landlords who will accept a voucher. Challenges for landlords start with being asked to take less in rent. This might be offset a little by offering more robust incentives. These might include support for completing paperwork, support for caseworkers who can help make a tenancy successful, and programs like MaineHousing's landlord incentives, such as signing bonuses for landlords who lease to voucher holders and funds for repairs to property, either before a lease is signed (to allow the unit to pass a Section 8 quality standards inspection) or after a tenancy ends (to assist with repairs and damages).

While many of Maine's housing authorities took advantage of the temporary 120% waiver that was offered by HUD from 2020-2024 as part of the national pandemic response, only three PHAs reported seeking waivers to HUD's FMR levels at other times:

- MaineHousing applied in 2015 for Knox County, and in 2020 for Knox, Lincoln and Waldo Counties. The outcome in 2015 was that HUD approved the Knox County waiver only partially, for the municipalities of Appleton, Friendship, St. George, North Haven, South Thomaston and Rockport. In response to the 2020 request, HUD approved waivers for all three counties.
- South Portland Housing Authority recently applied, and the waiver was granted.
- Portland Housing Authority applied in 2021, and the waiver was granted.

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.

The remaining housing authorities surveyed who have never requested FMR waivers cited several reasons for not doing so, among these being the cost to hire the consultants to complete the waiver application process, that their programs were operating smoothly within the current FMR, and that an FMR waiver does not result in a PHA receiving additional funds, but only results in that agency being able to issue fewer vouchers and serve fewer households due to the increase in the average voucher cost.

PHAs are interested in issuing as many vouchers as their budgets allow, and in many parts of the state (especially away from the coast) voucher rates are adequate to cover the cost of a typical rent. Because virtually all the state's available funding authority is in use at present, many members of the task force noted that seeking waivers at a time when there is no additional budget authority is not something that was likely to result in success.

Committee members emphasized that searching for housing with a voucher remains difficult, but that low FMR rates are just one of the contributing factors. In many cases, a household coming off a wait list after a lengthy wait will have found other housing in the meantime or no longer be eligible for other reasons; tenants with poor rental histories can also meet with difficulty in leasing; and in every region, the sheer lack of units is a major contributor to search problems.

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.

Public housing authorities in Maine vary widely in terms of their size and scope of activity. While all of them provide Housing Choice Vouchers and other direct housing services within their jurisdictions, some also administer and manage existing properties, while others are among the most prolific affordable housing developers in the state, creating new properties that serve families or older Mainers at different income levels.

Housing authorities that participate in development generally work as partners with other developers. These development projects are financed through existing programs that are available in the state through Maine's housing finance agency of statute, MaineHousing.

The programs used by public housing authorities to develop new housing units are the same programs that are available to other developers, and they derive from federal and state level programs. These are:

- **The 9% federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).** The primary resource to support development of affordable housing in the United States, 9% LIHTC provides subsidy in the form of a federal tax credit to developers of affordable rental housing. MaineHousing allocates the LIHTC to developers who sell (syndicate) the tax credit to investors. The money this raises is used as equity in the rental housing project. MaineHousing's allocation of the LIHTC is a competitive process scored based on criteria outlined in the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP).
- **The 4% federal LIHTC program.** 4% LIHTC operates in the same way, though provides less subsidy. Often these tax credits can be bundled with a State Low Income Housing Tax Credit, which is currently a time-limited program. The addition of the state credit to the federal credit can effectively turn the value of a 4% credit into a 9% credit. Other state-based tax credits include a credit for historic preservation which support redevelopment of historically-designated buildings, with a preference for housing.

These MaineHousing-administered are important resources, as a 9% credit will provide approximately 2/3 of the funding needed to construct a multi-unit property. Tax credit-based construction is, however, complex and rule-bound. Tax credits tend to work best with larger projects of 25 units or more, making them less feasible for more rural areas where adequate demand might not exist. Additional and significant state subsidy has been appropriated to help with gap funding in making the federal 4% tax credit workable since the 130th legislature.

Beyond tax credits, there are other state-based funding programs that have also proven helpful in helping PHAs develop affordable housing units. These include:

- **The Rural Affordable Rental Housing Program.** Established by the 130th Legislature and Governor Mills and subsequently re-capitalized in the 131st Legislature, this program is a

non-tax-credit subsidy that creates apartment projects of 5-18 units. Because there are no tax credits to offset the cost of the project, these properties may have higher income characteristics, up to 80% Area Median Income.

- **General Obligation Bonds.** From time to time, the legislature and Maine voters have authorized general obligation bonds to provide subsidy for creation of affordable housing. Most recently, in 2019, the state released \$50 Million in bonds intended to create housing for lower income seniors.

While some housing authorities have a limited number of market rate and mixed income properties in their portfolios, Housing Choice Vouchers are generally an option for use in all PHA-owned units except those already otherwise subsidized, such as older “Section 8,” Rural Development, and “public housing” properties.

It is important to point out that, as of January 2025, all current state-level funding for affordable housing development is time-limited and is expected to be exhausted in the near future. The Rural Affordable program is currently in its final tranche of funding, and the State LIHTC will sunset after a total of eight years. Although there is broad support and interest in supporting these programs, there currently is no plan to provide additional state funding for the creation of additional units. In the absence of other changes, after 2025, the main source of affordable housing capital will once come solely from the federal LIHTC.

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.

As noted above, PHAs in Maine generally make waiver requests, which are time and resource intensive, using the services of specialist consultants. In some cases, larger PHAs might be able to launch a waiver request from within their own offices, but in general, this is not a function that can be readily handled by most PHAs. Further, while always willing to support local PHAs in their work, MaineHousing does not have the staff capacity or specific expertise to address waiver requests for other jurisdictions.

Strategically, if the state wished to assist in the FMR waiver process, providing a funding source that could support a local PHA in hiring a consultant might serve this purpose. It is not clear, however, how many PHAs would take advantage of such an opportunity, given that virtually all of the state’s voucher authority is already in use.

As noted elsewhere in this report, however, it is not clear that waiver requests in general would be viewed favorably by HUD at a time when Maine is currently using all of its available vouchers and exceeding its budgetary authority, nor that all Maine PHAs would want waivers based on their survey responses on the subject.

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.

The chart comparing PHA answers to this question, as well as other responses relating to voucher issues, can be found in *Appendix C*. PHAs have discretion to set policies that can provide for additional search time where it is needed, but it is important to note that variations among the housing authorities drive changes in allowable search time.

PHAs must specify the length of an extension, and to determine the circumstances under which extensions will be granted. These policies vary by jurisdiction. Discretionary policies related to extension and expiration of search time must be described in each PHAs administrative plan [24 CFR 982.54].

There is often a correlation between the size of a PHA and the amount of search time that is permitted to the voucher holders, because a smaller PHA might only have a handful of vouchers available overall and a disproportionate number of those vouchers held up in lengthy searches, removes them from circulation for others in need. Eventually a search period ends, and after any applicable extensions expire, the voucher returns to the pool unused, enabling another person to use it for their search. This is a source of frustration for many searchers, but the reasoning behind it is that, as experience has shown, a search that extends to the end of the search period is not likely to be successful.

Perhaps the best way to understand this issue is to consider that if every person who was unable to find housing simply held on to their voucher and searched indefinitely, a smaller local housing authority would have no or far fewer vouchers available to issue at all.

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.

While the time frames governing searches are discussed above, the issue of voucher portability is a central tenet of the Housing Choice Voucher program.

A participant household that has been issued a voucher has the right to use their voucher assistance to lease a unit anywhere in the United States, providing that the unit is located within the jurisdiction of a PHA administering a tenant-based voucher program [24 CFR 982.353(b)]. The process by which a family obtains a voucher from one PHA and uses it to lease a unit in the jurisdiction of another PHA is known as portability.

Portability is governed by federal regulation, and each voucher issuer addresses the topic in its respective administrative plan. In certain cases, a voucher holder can search outside of the issuing PHAs jurisdiction immediately; in other circumstances they need to live within the jurisdiction for a set period of time before they can look elsewhere.

If a person is selected from the waitlist and their address *at time of application* is in the jurisdiction of the PHA issuing the voucher, they have portability and can port anywhere in the U.S. with that voucher. However, if a person is selected from the waitlist and their address at the time of

application *is not in the jurisdiction of the PHA issuing the voucher*, the applicant must locate and live in a unit within the issuing PHA's jurisdiction for a year before porting. This rule ensures that an applicant is not applying to lists with the least amount of wait time with no intention of living in that particular jurisdiction and then taking the subsidy allocated to that PHA and using it outside of the jurisdiction.

For example, if everyone applied to the Caribou waitlist because it is short, but then had no intention of living in Caribou, the subsidy would be used elsewhere and not be available to residents in Caribou.

PHAs, therefore, have a central interest in assuring that their voucher programs primarily serve residents of their jurisdictions. Each PHA receives its budget authority based on HUD's estimates of need in that jurisdiction. Portability rules exist both to maintain local voucher supplies as well as to delineate the payment arrangements for when one PHA's voucher is used outside of the area for which it was initially assigned. When a person ports to another PHA, the originating PHA is called the Initial PHA and the PHA to which they are ported is called the receiving PHA. The receiving PHA can choose to absorb the voucher cost in their own program or to bill the initial PHA. This decision is based on whether the receiving PHA has funding available to take the voucher as part of their own ongoing program.

Either way, the ported voucher remains under the administrative plan of the receiving PHA (the PHA administering the voucher). The receiving PHA administrative plan is what governs the voucher if the person leases in the new jurisdiction, regardless of whether the voucher is billed or absorbed, so aspects like subsidy standards, payment standards and reasonable accommodations are up to the receiving PHA regardless of whether they were granted by the initial PHA.

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.

The issues surrounding whether a landlord chooses to accept vouchers are not simply limited to low payment standards. Leasing to a voucher holder requires that a landlord sign a contract with the federal government and then submit to rules, including housing quality inspections -- failures of which can necessitate costly repairs. Landlords are often reluctant to accept vouchers for a variety of reasons, but the combination of lower payment standards and regulation often combine to create a difficult barrier to overcome.

To offset these issues, MaineHousing has, for the past several years, offered an incentive program to assist landlords who are willing to accept vouchered households. The program provided participating landlords with a \$750 signing bonus for each unit placed in the HCV program. Due to a budget reduction in 2025, that incentive has decreased to \$350 now.

The incentive program can also provide eligible applicants with security deposit funding on rental units and cover landlord costs for repairs and damages when a tenant vacates. The program is run in partnership with the Maine Association of Public Housing Directors (MAPHD).

It is estimated that hundreds of units of affordable housing have been made available to HCV tenants because through this program since it was first established with resources from the federal

Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act in September of 2021. The program has subsequently been extended, and is now funded using the monies from the State HOME Fund.

The task force agreed that the program might reach more landlords by offering more robust incentives. These could include support for completing paperwork, support for caseworkers who can help make a tenancy successful, and larger “signing bonuses” for landlords who lease to voucher holders. At the very least, the consensus was that funding should be sought to return the landlord incentives to the higher 2024 level.

Task force member Victoria Morales noted that, in her experience, landlord incentives work well. One unforeseen problem with the current incentive program is that landlords get the incentive at lease-up but then they want another incentive the following year, as they are still receiving less than the full market rent they could expect for the unit. Because the program has been structured as a one-time bonus, this is not currently possible.

Task force member Emily Flinkstrom noted that another helpful incentive comes from providing a landlord with more substantial renovation or repair funding in exchange for a pledge to rent to a tenant for a certain number of years. She referenced the “Home For All” program at New Hampshire’s Granite United Way as an example of this approach. While the Maine program’s incentives have been successful, there might be a higher level of success with a larger incentive.

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.

Most landlords who provide rental units in Maine are aware of the federal Section 8 program. Many local housing authorities reach out to landlords with vacancies to urge the landlords to accept vouchers if they have not already done so. While this is an informal approach, the concept of local PHAs working with local landlords has always been at the center of the voucher program.

Two members of the task force noted that there does appear to be a need for more generalized landlord education – not just around the HCV program but around best practices. This is a role that has been undertaken by landlord associations and should be promoted.

There was consensus that the landlord incentive programs described here continue to be the best tool to attract new landlords into the program.

Maine’s housing vouchers are administered by twenty different independent authorities, under federal rules. Each PHA, including MaineHousing, has individual contracts with HUD that inform the shape of their programs, and while very similar, those programs do vary from issuer to issuer based on the agency’s local needs and circumstances.

As such, there is very little that could be done from a state legislative perspective to regulate, amend federal rules, or make recommendations to change this federal program in Maine. Rather than a legislative effort to attempt regulation in these programs, the task force would recommend that legislators seeking waivers engage in discussions with individual PHAs about the feasibility of

making changes in a particular jurisdiction. If a waiver is seen as a solution, that solution needs to be considered on a local level.

In addition, the task force PHA representatives did not believe that HUD would likely grant FMR waivers in the near future to a state in which all the available budget authority is already being used. While there were compelling arguments made about the need for higher payment standards in parts of the state, the process to obtain such waivers is, as has been shown, cumbersome, very expensive, and potentially not helpful to the program's efficacy overall. As noted, if successful, waivers can have the effect of causing overall rent inflation in a region, even beyond those units that already accept vouchers.

Finally, it is important to note that Maine's federal delegation is well informed about the Section 8 program and the limitations it faces under current funding levels. Maine's housing authorities, as well as their counterparts in other parts of the nation, continue to advocate for additional funding, which is the only reliable path toward Maine being able to issue more vouchers.

Appendices

A: Maine Section 8 Income Limit Table

B: Budget Authority and Percentage in Use as of October 2024, by PHA

C: Survey Responses

Maine Voucher Income Limit Table

APPENDIX A

STATE:MAINE -----FY2024 SECTION 8 INCOME LIMITS----- Effective April 1, 2024

	PROGRAM	1 PERSON	2 PERSON	3 PERSON	4 PERSON	5 PERSON	6 PERSON	7 PERSON	8 PERSON
Bangor, ME MSA									
Bangor, ME HMFA									
FY 2024 MFI: \$95,700	EXTR LOW INCOME	19900	22750	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	33150	37850	42600	47350	51150	54900	58700	62500
	LOW-INCOME	53050	60600	68200	75750	81850	87900	93950	100000
Penobscot County, ME (part) HMFA									
FY 2024 MFI: \$73,700	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000
Lewiston-Auburn, ME MSA									
FY 2024 MFI: \$77,500	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000
Portland-South Portland, ME MSA									
Cumberland County, ME (part) HMFA									
FY 2024 MFI: \$103,700	EXTR LOW INCOME	21500	24550	27600	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	35750	40850	45950	51050	55150	59250	63350	67400
	LOW-INCOME	57200	65350	73550	81700	88250	94800	101350	107850
Portland, ME HMFA									
FY 2024 MFI: \$127,500	EXTR LOW INCOME	26800	30600	34450	38250	41350	44400	47450	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	44650	51000	57400	63750	68850	73950	79050	84150
	LOW-INCOME	68500	78250	88050	97800	105650	113450	121300	129100
Sagadahoc County, ME HMFA									
FY 2024 MFI: \$97,300	EXTR LOW INCOME	20450	23400	26300	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	34100	38950	43800	48650	52550	56450	60350	64250
	LOW-INCOME	54500	62300	70100	77850	84100	90350	96550	102800
York County, ME (part) HMFA									
FY 2024 MFI: \$97,900	EXTR LOW INCOME	20550	23500	26450	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	34300	39200	44100	48950	52900	56800	60700	64650
	LOW-INCOME	54850	62650	70500	78300	84600	90850	97100	103400
York-Kittery-South Berwick, ME HMFA									
FY 2024 MFI: \$125,500	EXTR LOW INCOME	26400	30150	33900	37650	40700	43700	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	43950	50200	56500	62750	67800	72800	77850	82850
	LOW-INCOME	68500	78250	88050	97800	105650	113450	121300	129100
Aroostook County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$74,500	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000
Franklin County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$80,500	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000
Hancock County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$88,300	EXTR LOW INCOME	18550	21200	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	30950	35350	39750	44150	47700	51250	54750	58300
	LOW-INCOME	49500	56550	63600	70650	76350	82000	87650	93300

	PROGRAM	1 PERSON	2 PERSON	3 PERSON	4 PERSON	5 PERSON	6 PERSON	7 PERSON	8 PERSON
Kennebec County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$87,000	EXTR LOW INCOME	18300	20900	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	30450	34800	39150	43500	47000	50500	53950	57450
	LOW-INCOME	48750	55700	62650	69600	75200	80750	86350	91900
Knox County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$93,200	EXTR LOW INCOME	19250	22000	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	32100	36650	41250	45800	49500	53150	56800	60500
	LOW-INCOME	51350	58650	66000	73300	79200	85050	90900	96800
Lincoln County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$94,900	EXTR LOW INCOME	19700	22500	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	32800	37500	42150	46850	50600	54350	58100	61850
	LOW-INCOME	52500	60000	67450	74950	80950	86950	92950	98950
Oxford County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$73,700	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000
Piscataquis County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$66,600	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000
Somerset County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$74,400	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000
Waldo County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$80,300	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000
Washington County, ME									
FY 2024 MFI: \$72,400	EXTR LOW INCOME	17300	20440	25820	31200	36580	41960	47340	52720
	VERY LOW INCOME	28850	33000	37100	41200	44500	47800	51100	54400
	LOW-INCOME	46150	52750	59350	65900	71200	76450	81750	87000

Budget Authority and Percentage in Use, by PHA

PHA Name	Total 2024 Budget Authority (BA)	% BA in use Dec. 2024
Maine State Housing Authority	\$35,802,636	105.67%
Portland Housing Authority	\$29,865,067	110.60%
The Housing Authority of the City of Westbrook	\$10,420,010	98.06%
Lewiston Housing Authority	\$9,696,506	105.43%
South Portland Housing Authority	\$8,972,974	102.81%
Sanford Housing Authority	\$5,777,033	108.40%
Brunswick Housing Authority	\$4,546,545	105.29%
Auburn Housing Authority	\$4,268,703	101.21%
Housing Authority City of Bangor	\$3,439,510	108.28%
Ellsworth Housing Authority	\$2,525,147	98.95%
Waterville Housing Authority	\$2,343,013	102.56%
Augusta Housing Authority	\$2,267,556	102.06%
Bath Housing Authority	\$2,092,390	107.39%
Biddeford Housing Authority	\$1,518,163	112.10%
Old Town Housing Authority	\$1,122,702	113.52%
Brewer Housing Authority	\$928,394	115.44%
Caribou Housing Agency	\$925,194	94.40%
Fort Fairfield Housing Authority	\$670,782	108.32%
Presque Isle Housing Authority	\$437,594	100.10%
Van Buren Housing Authority	\$309,952	100.85%

TABLE: General Voucher Questions

	Are you currently in a voucher issuance pause?	Do all new units that your housing authority creates accept vouchers?
Auburn Housing Authority	No	Yes
Augusta Housing	No	Yes
Bangor Housing Authority	Yes, HUD initiated	Yes
Bath Housing Authority	Yes	Not necessarily. It would depend on the program used to develop the housing. For example, the rural program rents exceed the payment standards and therefore won't be able to accept vouchers.
Biddeford Housing	Yes	Yes
Brunswick Housing Authority	No	Yes
Caribou Housing Authority	No	N/A
Fort Fairfield Housing Authority	No	Yes
Housing Authority of the City of Old Town	No	Yes
Lewiston Housing Authority	Yes	Yes
MaineHousing	Yes	Yes
Portland Housing Authority	Yes	Yes
Presque Isle Housing Authority	No	Our 32 Market rate units do. The USDA units will not because they have a subsidy.
Sanford Housing Authority	Yes	Yes and we also have conversations with other developers who are doing market rate units to see if they will accept vouchers and at our rental rates.

TABLE: General Voucher Questions

	Are you currently in a voucher issuance pause?	Do all new units that your housing authority creates accept vouchers?
South Portland Housing Authority	Yes	Yes
MDI & Ellsworth Housing Authority*	We are not, but we are expending 100% of our Budget Authority.	
Van Buren Housing Authority	No	Housing does not create new units at this time.
Waterville Housing Authority	Yes	Yes
Westbrook Housing Authority	Yes, until January 1, 2025	Yes

TABLE: Miscellaneous Questions

1

	What programs do you use at your housing authority to create new units?	Would your PHA be interested in applying for a waiver, if there was technical assistance of some sort available?	Is there anything else you would like to add about the voucher program and what could be done to improve it on a statewide basis?
Auburn Housing Authority	MH Rural Rental Housing, LIHTC, CDBG funds	Not sure, if you have a fixed HAP budget of say, \$100 and your per unit HAP cost is \$10, then you can lease up 10 vouchers. If the average cost of a voucher increases to \$12.50 per voucher you can only lease up 8 vouchers. You help fewer families. We've seen that already with the rising rent costs impacting the number of voucherholders our HAP budget can support.	
Augusta Housing	Low Income Housing Tax Credits; Historic Tax Credits; Housing Trust Fund; State HOME funds	No, not without a substantial increase in federal funding.	Continue to build more affordable housing units, as well as market and middle-income units. to meet housing demand and mitigate the upward pressure on rents due to that high demand for the existing housing stock, including affordable units.
Bangor Housing Authority	Low Income Housing Tax Credits and Private financing	As a Moving to Work agency, a waiver is not needed.	Continuing to advocate for more resources directly locally.
Bath Housing Authority	LLIP to incent landlords. New construction and acquisition/rehab to create new units.	No. I would prefer to continue to advocate with HUD to find ways to keep payment standards in line with actual market rents.	
Biddeford Housing	LIHTC, MSHA, AHP, market financing	No	Not burden the PHAs with any new regulations, requirements etc. We need to just advocate for more voucher funding at a the fed level
Brunswick Housing Authority	We are active developers with 38 new 2 & 3 bedroom units under construction in Topsham scheduled for lease up in July 2025.	Yes	The overriding issue we face is a lack of affordable inventory.
Caribou Housing Authority	N/A		
Fort Fairfield Housing Authority	LIHTC nothing since 2013	Maybe	The needs of residents vary among the PHAs which can affect the HCV program.
Housing Authority of the City of Old Town	We have used our development corp to build new units.	No	
Lewiston Housing Authority	LIHTC	Technical assistance is not the issue.	Build more units. We have a supply issue.
MaineHousing	LIHTC, Supportive Housing programs, HTF, FedHOME, PBV	No. We are in a shortfall so we would not be interested in applying for a waiver at this time.	Landlord Education about tenant and landlord laws and creating a lease.
Portland Housing Authority	RAD, S. 18, LIHTC		Whereas its a federally administered program I'm not sure what statewide effort could be done to modify the program.
Presque Isle Housing Authority	We have purchased a few private market units, we are in process of obtaining a USDA RD property.	I do not think we would be interested at this time.	Statewide marketing campaign for landlords and public information about vouchers.

TABLE: Miscellaneous Questions

2

	What programs do you use at your housing authority to create new units?	Would your PHA be interested in applying for a waiver, if there was technical assistance of some sort available?	Is there anything else you would like to add about the voucher program and what could be done to improve it on a statewide basis?
Sanford Housing Authority	We are now in process of developing a Housing First project that will be project based vouchered from our pool of vouchers. We are also applying for Rural Affordable Rental Housing funding to create 18 units. We work with the City of Sanford Landbank to create single family homes and have sold 2 homes to workforce housing and will continue to explore opportunities to do more.	Possibly but we try to balance rental rates and our HAP contract with HUD to maximize utilization. An increase to 120% would mean we have fewer vouchers to issue.	Increase Funding: Advocate for higher federal funding to issue more vouchers to reduce waitlists. Landlord Incentives: Offer tax breaks or grants to landlords who accept vouchers, especially in underserved areas. Continue Developing Affordable Housing: Increase the construction of affordable housing units through public-private partnerships. Look at how to develop housing throughout the continuum including funding shelters sufficiently. Funding for Housing Navigators for Housing Authorities. Impact Assessments: Regularly assess the program's outcomes to understand gaps and successes.
South Portland Housing Authority	LIHTC, PBV, Commerical Loan, 221 HUD Insured Loan and reserves.	We are equipped to do that on our own.	We need more housing units that are affordable to voucher holders.
MDI & Ellsworth Housing Authority*		We may be interested if we are looking at a waiver to increase our Payment Standards to 120% annually.	Opening the program to Low Income participants could act to provide some financial balance, as more beneficiaries could be assisted.
Van Buren Housing Authority	Landlord outreach, conversation.		
Waterville Housing Authority	A non-profit development company has utilized the LIHTC program. We are now turning to property management for other developers who need an experienced LIHTC manager.	Not necessarily. To the extent participants are finding units at the 110%, we would not seek to pay more because that would reduce the number of people we can help.	
Westbrook Housing Authority	LIHTC Program, Maine Housing Rural Rental Apartments Program.	NO. This PHA maintains near or a 100% voucher utilization without need for a waiver.	YES. The state needs to prioritize new construction with additional bond money and needs to have a set aside of funds for PHA's to ensure the construction of apartments that vouchers can be attached as Project Based Vouchers. This will ensure high voucher utilization and will ensure voucher mobility through the PBV voucher system. The requirement for PHA's to mandate a waiver above it's already authorized 120% FMR level is not the effective tool to achieve 100% voucher utilization. Westbrook Housing has consistently proven how this can happen.

TABLE: Voucher Use Questions

1

	How many vouchers does your PHA administer?	How long do you give people searching for units to search before they must return their voucher to your housing authority?	What strategies do you use to encourage landlords to accept housing choice vouchers?
Auburn Housing Authority	595 authorized, 500 on the street	Voucher holders looking for apartments can get 30-day extension(s).	Meetings with local landlord association, and the MH Landlord Incentive Program is a very useful tool.
Augusta Housing	406	60 days with an opportunity to extend another 60 days (120 days total).	Landlord Incentive Program; relationship building with new landlords.
Bangor Housing Authority	459	Participants have 120 days with one opportunity for an extension for an additional 120 days. (240 total)	We have strong relationships with landlords so they will reach out to us with vacancies. In addition we can offer a landlord incentive for a new lease up as well as help with security deposits and any potential damages.
Bath Housing Authority	264	120 days with 90 day extensions; no accommodations exceed one year.	LLIP. Good communication. Building a partnership with landlords. Keeping our payment standards in line with market rents as able.
Biddeford Housing	500	90 days +	Incentive programs. Landlord association presentations.
Brunswick Housing Authority	516	Up to 180 days	We utilize the Landlord Incentive program to provide a bonus for new and renewed leases, assistance with repairs due to inspections and security deposit assistance.
Caribou Housing Authority	246	60 days, with a chance to request an extension	Sign on Bonus, Security Deposit Assistance, Repair Grants, Damage Reimbursements
Fort Fairfield Housing Authority	152	60 days plus extensions usually up to 6 months	LL incentive, existing relationships
Housing Authority of the City of Old Town	213	Up to 12 months	Landlord incentives, outreach and education
Lewiston Housing Authority	1524	180 days	MSHA LL incentive program
MaineHousing	3602	240 with maximum up to 365 days with an RA	Provide a landlord briefing for new landlords, offer incentives. Provide prompt monthly payments
Portland Housing Authority	2027	We extend deadlines so from a practical standpoint there is no 'hard' deadline.	Network with rental alliance and provide education. Our voucher levels are below the 80% AMI rents so inclusionary zoning in Portland does not create opportunities for our voucher recipients.
Presque Isle Housing Authority	79 HCV 79 mainstream vouchers	Our vouchers are issued for 60 calendar days and one 30-day extension, and additional as accommodation requests.	Sales pitch regarding benefits of consistent rental payments, landlord incentive payment.
Sanford Housing Authority	719	We give 180 days.	We hold monthly meetings with Landlords to maintain relationships, we use the financial incentives to encourage them and we have a Housing Navigator to assist with any tenant/landlord issues to help resolve and prevent evictions.
South Portland Housing Authority	793	120	Incentives and Landlord Education.
MDI & Ellsworth Housing Authority*	382	90 days is the general cap, though our policy allows for additional extensions if justified.	Maine State's Landlord Incentives Program.
Van Buren Housing Authority	104	As long as needed at the moment.	
Waterville Housing Authority	347 WHA, and 1 port in = 348 (WHA authorized for 394)	120 Days	Fully participate in the LLIP funded by MaineHousing.
Westbrook Housing Authority	1026	The mandatory 6 months plus automatic extensions per HUD guidelines, with VASH, NED, and MS-811 vouchers we give a year plus automatic extensions. During declared emergencies such as Covid, we automatically issue 1 year with open-ended extensions per HUD guidelines.	Prompt Customer Service with staff who treat landlords as a customer and work with landlords to easily access the program. Have automated software system to include landlord portal for ease in servicing landlord accounts. Prompt processing of paperwork, prompt payment of monthly HAP payment.

TABLE: Waiver Questions

1

	Has your PHA ever sought a fair market rent waiver from HUD? If so, when?	If you have requested a waiver, what was the result of the request?	If you have NOT requested such a waiver, why?	Please discuss barriers you face in requesting a fair market rent waiver.
Auburn Housing Authority	Nothing beyond the 120% PS waiver offered by HUD since COVID.	N/A	Market data is not sufficient to gain HUD approval, and the study is typically expensive.	
Augusta Housing	No	N/A	Depending on the year, Augusta Housing may only have enough federal funding allocated to pay FMR; some years we are able to pay up to 110% of FMR, but never above 110%. To my knowledge, we have never had to drop below FMR (down to a 90% FMR limit).	Federal funding limits; expectations by HUD, as well as our own goal, to serve as many participants as possible, up to our voucher allotment.
Bangor Housing Authority	No	N/A	It's not necessary. As a Moving to Work Agency, we have authority to adjust rents above FMR.	N/A
Bath Housing Authority	No	N/A	The process is onerous, time-consuming, leaves us with prior payment standards while we appeal, and is cost prohibitive for a small PHA.	See Left
Biddeford Housing	No	N/A	We have a finite amount of funding so increased payment standards typically result in less families assisted.	None
Brunswick Housing Authority	Yes - current waiver expires December 31, 2024.	Approved		
Caribou Housing Authority	No	N/A	Haven't found that it was needed.	
Fort Fairfield Housing Authority	No	N/A	Haven't needed to yet.	Costs, time, and burden on staff.
Housing Authority of the City of Old Town	No	N/A	Have not needed it.	
Lewiston Housing Authority	No	N/A	Our sample size was too small to get the required responses for a successful appeal.	Size of Market.

TABLE: Waiver Questions

	Has your PHA ever sought a fair market rent waiver from HUD? If so, when?	If you have requested a waiver, what was the result of the request?	If you have NOT requested such a waiver, why?	Please discuss barriers you face in requesting a fair market rent waiver.
MaineHousing	Yes 2015 for Knox County and 2020 for Knox, Lincoln and Waldo counties -2021 HUD offered COVID waivers to set PS up to 120% of FMR.	HUD approved waivers only for Appleton, Friendship, St. George, North Haven, S. Thomaston and Rockport in 2015 and approved all three counties in 2020-We were approved for the COVID waivers through December 2024.		Outside of the COVID streamlined waiver process HUD requires a PHA who holds jurisdiction for the FMR area to conduct survey on non subsidized rentals to determine the rental costs for a certain area. They require a certain percentage to validate the request. It requires an outside agency to send and gather the surveys and has been difficult to receive the response numbers needed to validate the request. The cost of rents have increased but wages have decreased which has increased the per unit cost and made it difficult to assist people off the waitlist. Increasing the FMR will reduce the number of voucher households we can support.
Portland Housing Authority	Yes- 2021	Granted		Cost and time.
Presque Isle Housing Authority	No	N/A	We have managed within the established FMR perimeters. Recent FMR increases have helped. Lack of staffing to research and complete the request.	Staffing to collect the required information and facilitate the request. Data on current market rates since they have changed so rapidly.
Sanford Housing Authority	No	N/A	We have steadily increased our lease up rate at 110% of FMR; we are managing the budget to not go into shortfall funding, keeping voucher utilization maximized.	Market analysis constraints within our jurisdiction.
South Portland Housing Authority	Yes - once recently	Got the waiver.	N/A	None
MDI & Ellsworth Housing Authority*	No	N/A	The process is apparently expensive and complicated. Additionally, there are concerns that increasing our payments with result in additional increases in the private rental market.	The request process and general concerns about impacts.
Van Buren Housing Authority	No		No need to at this point.	
Waterville Housing Authority	No	N/A	Time and cost to hire a consultant, and desire to serve as many as possible if at a lower PS. To the extent that participants can find units to rent at 110% of FMR, we are not planning to seek a waiver.	Expertise and Cost

TABLE: Waiver Questions

	Has your PHA ever sought a fair market rent waiver from HUD? If so, when?	If you have requested a waiver, what was the result of the request?	If you have NOT requested such a waiver, why?	Please discuss barriers you face in requesting a fair market rent waiver.
Westbrook Housing Authority	No and Yes. No, we have not sought a waiver, but implimented the waiver issued by HUD in 2020 through March 2024.	N/A	Not necessary as this HA has maintained 98.5% to 100% voucher utilization since 2014.	None as not needed since this HA maintains consistent 100% or near 100% voucher utilization rate since 2014 with payment standards from 90% to 120% depending upon the year, and currently with payment standard at 100% of FMR.