

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH LEGISLATURE

**Legislative Document**

**No. 1240**

H. P. 962

House of Representatives, March 13, 1979

Referred to the Committee on State Government. Sent up for concurrence and ordered printed.

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

Presented by Mr. Connolly of Portland.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED  
SEVENTY-NINE

**AN ACT to Create an Office of Housing Affairs.**

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

Sec. 1. 5 MRSA c. 314 is enacted to read:

**CHAPTER 314**

**OFFICE OF HOUSING AFFAIRS ACT**

§ 3331. Title

This chapter shall be known as the Office of Housing Affairs Act.

§ 3332. Policy and purpose

The Legislature finds:

1. **Housing shortage.** That there is a continuing shortage of decent and reasonably priced housing in Maine;
2. **Housing services.** That there are several state agencies providing housing services, subsidies and financing in Maine with no established means of coordinating their activities;

3. **Funds.** That there are numerous federal housing and related agencies providing funds to the State, its communities, its people and its financial institutions with no systematic review of the benefit of these programs to the people of Maine; and

4. **Planning and evaluation.** That there is a lack of organized, continuous citizen contribution to the planning and evaluation of many publicly funded housing activities in Maine.

The Legislature declares it to be in the public interest that, within the Executive Department, there be a focus for housing policy development, coordination and evaluation in order to promote the maximum feasible effectiveness and awareness of housing-related activities undertaken by federal, state, regional and local agencies in Maine.

§ 3333. **Establishment of the Office of Housing Affairs**

There is established, within the Executive Department, an Office of Housing Affairs to carry out the purposes of this chapter. The office shall assist with the development of state housing policies and the coordination of housing programs. The office shall be directly responsible to the Governor.

§ 3334. **Director of the Office of Housing Affairs**

1. **Appointment.** The Governor shall appoint a full-time director of the Office of Housing Affairs. The director shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor and until his successor is appointed and qualified. The director shall be paid a salary fixed by the Governor.

2. **Qualification.** The director of the Office of Housing Affairs shall have a background in the housing field, including experience related to planning or administration of housing programs or policies.

3. **Powers and duties.** The director shall:

A. Administer the office;

B. Appoint the staff of the office and prescribe their duties. Professional employees shall be hired as unclassified employees and shall serve at the pleasure of the director. All other employees shall be subject to the Personnel Law;

C. Prepare and submit a budget for the office;

D. Seek resources of federal housing funding and propose ways to make more efficient and more effective use of state and federal housing-related funds;

E. Prepare an annual comprehensive housing policy action plan for the State and submit this plan to the Governor and the Legislature not later than February 15th of each year;

**F. Convene meetings and be chairman of the inter-agency Housing Programs Coordinating Group;**

**G. Convene meetings of and act as secretariat of the State Housing Policy Advisory Board;**

**H. Provide to the Governor current assessment, review and comment on federal and state housing programs and policies;**

**I. Request information and assistance from governmental agencies necessary to carry out the duties of the office; and**

**J. Prepare a report on the activities of the Office of Housing Affairs, to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature annually.**

**The director may request and accept cash and in-kind grants-in-aid from governmental and nongovernmental sources.**

**§ 3335. Office of Housing Affairs**

**1. Powers and duties. The Office of Housing Affairs, in addition to the specific duties of the director, shall:**

**A. Provide, as requested, information and technical assistance to state, local and regional housing-related agencies, including nonprofit organizations involved in housing activities;**

**B. Provide information on housing programs as requested to interested families, individuals, businesses or other organizations in need of the information;**

**C. Provide information and technical assistance to the Housing Programs Coordinating Group and to the State Housing Policy Advisory Board; and**

**D. Undertake projects in support of the purposes of this Act.**

**§ 3336. Comprehensive Housing Policy Action Plan**

**The Comprehensive Housing Policy Action Plan shall be revised annually and shall be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature by February 15th of each year. The plan shall utilize information and analysis provided annually by the State Planning Office under legislation providing for housing data reports under Title 5, section 3306-A. The plan shall include, but not be limited to:**

**1. Assessment of need. An assessment of the need for and effectiveness of publicly funded housing activities in the State;**

**2. Designation of actions. A designation of actions that may be undertaken to improve publicly funded housing activities in the State, to initiate innovative activities and to coordinate or eliminate activities where appropriate;**

3. **Availability of capital.** An evaluation of the overall availability of capital in the State necessary for housing financing and recommendations appropriate for improving their availability and terms.

4. **Laws and rules.** An assessment of the effectiveness of state housing laws and rules and their impact on housing costs and recommendations for changes in these laws and rules; and

5. **Summary.** A summary of the contents of the plan at the beginning of the plan document.

**§ 3337. Housing Programs Coordinating Group**

1. **Membership.** The Housing Programs Coordinating Group shall consist of representatives of designated state agencies involved in housing programs. These representatives shall be the directors of the agencies specified in this section, or their designees: The Maine State Housing Authority; the Bureau of Resource Development; the Bureau of Maine's Elderly; the Office of Energy Resources; the Division of Community Services and the State Planning Office. Representatives of other governmental agencies and private organizations shall be requested to participate in meetings of the group.

2. **Meetings.** The director of the Office of Housing Affairs shall call meetings of the group at least once every 2 months and shall chair the meetings.

3. **Purpose.** The purposes of the group shall be to facilitate coordination among agencies to assure effective and efficient programs, to share information, to provide a forum for discussion of the comprehensive housing policy action plan, to review implementation of the plan, to discuss ways of obtaining federal funding for housing activities in the State and to discuss any other housing-related matters that come before the group.

**§ 3338. State Housing Policy Advisory Board**

1. **Membership.** The State Housing Policy Advisory Board shall consist of 17 members representing a broad cross section of citizens and professionals involved in the housing field. There shall be at least 2 low income representatives, 2 elderly representatives, 2 representatives of the housing industry, 2 representatives of the financial community, 2 representatives from the Maine State Housing Authority Advisory Board, one representative of community action agencies, one representative of the handicapped, one representative of Indians and 4 members representing the public. All members shall be appointed by the Governor and shall serve 4-year terms. In the event of a vacancy, a person shall be appointed to fill the unexpired term. One of each of the representatives of groups represented by 2 or more persons shall be appointed for a 2-year term in the first round of appointments. The members shall be entitled to be reimbursed for mileage to and from meetings at the same rate as state employees.

**2. Meetings.** The State Housing Policy Advisory Board shall meet at least once every 3 months and shall submit a summary of its activities to the Governor and the Legislature annually as an attachment to the annual report of the director of the Office of Housing Affairs.

**3. Purpose.** The primary purpose of the advisory board is to bring to the attention of the director, the Governor, the Legislature and state and federal agencies, the concerns of Maine people regarding housing needs, problems, programs, policies and legislation. The advisory board shall also advise on and comment to the director on the contents of the comprehensive housing policy action plan and on the progress made in implementing it.

**Sec. 2. Appropriation.** The following funds shall be appropriated from the General Fund to carry out the purposes of this Act.

	1979-80	1980-81
<b>EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT</b>		
Office of Housing Affairs		
Positions	(2)	(2)
Personal Services	\$27,000	\$37,800
All Other	6,200	4,500
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Total	\$33,200	\$42,300
State Housing Policy Advisory Board		
All Other	\$ 900	\$ 1,200

**STATEMENT OF FACT**

The purpose of this bill is to establish in the Executive Department a focus of housing policy development and program coordination. The major features of the bill are:

1. The establishment of an Office of Housing Affairs to be headed by a director who is responsible to the Governor. The major functions of the office are to:
  - A. Advise the Governor on housing policies and programs;
  - B. Seek out sources of federal housing funds and find ways to make programs more efficient and effective;
  - C. Annually prepare for the Governor and Legislature a comprehensive housing policy action plan which will include evaluations of and recommendations on housing programs.

D. Provide information and technical assistance as requested to governmental agencies and the public; and

E. Chair the Housing Programs Coordinating Group;

2. The establishment of the Housing Programs Coordinating Group, consisting of designated state agencies administering housing programs, which will coordinate programs, including implementation of the comprehensive housing policy action plan and which will discuss federal funding and other housing matters that come before the group; and

3. The establishment of a State Housing Policy Advisory Board, consisting of 17 members representing the public and consumers and providers of housing, to advise the Governor, the Legislature and state and federal agencies on housing problems.

The need for a new executive branch focus for housing has been expressed in past state housing policy reports and at special hearings held by the Joint Standing Committee on State Government in August, 1978.