

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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127th MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2016

Legislative Document

No. 1611

H.P. 1099

House of Representatives, February 25, 2016

**An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Commission To
Strengthen and Align the Services Provided to Maine's Veterans by
Establishing an Interagency Council To Coordinate Services for
Homeless Veterans**

Reported by Representative LUCHINI of Ellsworth for the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs pursuant to Resolve 2015, chapter 48, section 7.

Reference to the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs suggested and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 218.

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

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

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

2 **Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §12004-L, sub-§14** is enacted to read:

3 **14.**

4 Maine Interagency Council to Not Authorized 37-B MRSA §513-A
5 Coordinate Services to
6 Homeless Veterans

7 **Sec. 2. 37-B MRSA §513-A** is enacted to read:

8 **§513-A. Maine Interagency Council to Coordinate Services to Homeless Veterans**

9 **1. Maine Interagency Council to Coordinate Services to Homeless Veterans;**
10 **established.** The Maine Interagency Council to Coordinate Services to Homeless
11 Veterans, referred to in this section as "the council," is established to maximize services
12 provided by state and federal agencies and other organizations dedicated to serving
13 veterans in the State.

14 **2. Members.** The council consists of the following 8 members:

15 A. The director, who is the chair of the council;

16 B. The Director of the Maine State Housing Authority, or a designee;

17 C. A representative of the Department of Health and Human Services who oversees
18 the administration of services and benefits to residents of the State at risk of being
19 homeless, appointed by the Commissioner of Health and Human Services;

20 D. The Commissioner of Transportation, or a designee;

21 E. The Commissioner of Corrections, or a designee;

22 F. A representative of a nonprofit homelessness services provider, appointed by the
23 director;

24 G. A member of the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction
25 over veterans affairs, appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker
26 of the House of Representatives; and

27 H. One additional member that a majority of the members of the council determines
28 would contribute to the efforts of the council.

29 **3. Terms.** Members appointed pursuant to paragraph F and named pursuant to
30 paragraph H serve 2-year terms. A legislative member serves during the term of office
31 for which the member was elected.

32 **4. Advisory group of federal agency representatives.** The council may form an
33 advisory group of federal agency representatives that may include representatives of the
34 United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the United States Department of Housing
35 and Urban Development and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs'
36 supportive services for veteran families program.

1 **5. Meetings.** The council shall meet at least 4 times per year at a time and location
2 determined by the director, except that the council is not required to meet more than once
3 in 2016.

4 **6. Duties; strategic plan.** The council is charged with developing strategies to
5 enhance coordination and communication among agencies and organizations that provide
6 services that seek to place veterans in permanent housing and that seek to improve access
7 to services known to support housing stability for veterans who are experiencing
8 homelessness or veterans who are at risk of homelessness. The council shall develop a
9 strategic plan that:

10 A. Establishes a baseline for homelessness in the State from which improvements
11 can be measured. In determining the baseline, the council is not required to use the
12 federal definition of homelessness and may include levels of housing instability or
13 ranges of homelessness;

14 B. Develops a method of measuring the problem of homelessness among veterans in
15 the State in a manner that demonstrates whether or not efforts to reduce the number
16 of homeless veterans in the State have been successful;

17 C. Identifies specific processes for improving communication among agencies that
18 provide services to veterans, including services unrelated to homelessness, that will
19 facilitate identification of veterans in need of housing assistance or veterans who may
20 be at risk of homelessness and maximize resources available to address the problem
21 of homelessness among veterans; and

22 D. Develops a framework and timeline for determining progress of communication
23 and coordination efforts targeting the problem of homelessness among veterans and
24 the effectiveness of those efforts at reducing the problem of homelessness among
25 veterans.

26 **7. Lead agency; staff.** The bureau is designated as the lead agency responsible for
27 carrying out the duties of the council and the requirements of this section. The director is
28 authorized to establish a position within the bureau to facilitate the purposes of this
29 section and provide staff services to the council.

30 **8. Report.** The council shall submit a report of its efforts to develop enhanced
31 methods of communication among providers of services to veterans, recommendations to
32 maximize existing services to address homelessness among veterans and
33 recommendations to increase access to services that support the placement of veterans in
34 suitable, permanent housing. The report and any suggestions for legislation must be
35 submitted no later than February 15th annually to the joint standing committee of the
36 Legislature having jurisdiction over veterans affairs and the committee is authorized to
37 submit legislation to implement the recommendations included in the council's report.

38 **Sec. 3. Initial meeting; initial members.** The Director of the Bureau of Maine
39 Veterans' Services within the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency
40 Management shall convene the initial meeting of the Maine Interagency Council to
41 Coordinate Services to Homeless Veterans established in the Maine Revised Statutes,
42 Title 37-B, section 513-A no later than December 1, 2016. Except for the member

1 described in Title 37-B, section 513-A, paragraph H, initial council members must be
2 named and their names provided to the Director of the Bureau of Maine Veterans'
3 Services no later than October 15, 2016.

4

SUMMARY

5 This bill was submitted by the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal
6 Affairs pursuant to Resolve 2015, chapter 48. The bill implements some of the
7 recommendations made by the Commission To Strengthen and Align the Services
8 Provided to Maine's Veterans. The bill establishes an interagency council to address
9 homelessness among veterans by maximizing existing services, enhancing
10 communication among providers and improving access to services that support
11 permanent and stable housing for veterans.