

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

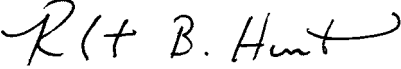
No. 1426

H.P. 922

House of Representatives, March 30, 2023

**An Act to Secure Housing for the Most Vulnerable Maine Residents
by Amending the Laws Governing Municipal General Assistance**

Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed.


ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative MATHIESON of Kittery.
Cosponsored by Senator BALDACCI of Penobscot and
Representatives: CRAVEN of Lewiston, GATTINE of Westbrook, GRAMLICH of Old
Orchard Beach, HASENFUS of Readfield, MADIGAN of Waterville, MILLETT of Cape
Elizabeth, SARGENT of York, Senator: BRENNER of Cumberland.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §4302-A** is enacted to read:

3 **§4302-A. Required training**

4 No later than the 120th day following appointment or election, an overseer shall
5 complete training on the requirements of this chapter. The department shall adopt rules to
6 implement this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules
7 as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

8 **Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §4305, sub-§3-B**, as amended by PL 2005, c. 231, §1, is repealed
9 and the following enacted in its place:

10 **3-B. Temporary maximum levels.** Notwithstanding subsection 3-A, municipalities
11 shall establish an aggregate maximum level of assistance that is equivalent to the amount
12 of rental assistance provided for tenant-based housing choice vouchers under Section 8 of
13 the United States Housing Act of 1937, Public Law 75-412, 50 Stat. 888, as amended,
14 except that the benefit level may not be less than the difference between the applicant's
15 income and 110% of the area's fair market rent.

16 **Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §4309, sub-§2-A** is enacted to read:

17 **2-A. Redetermination of housing eligibility.** Notwithstanding subsection 2, if
18 general assistance is being used to pay rent for an applicant whose rent is subject to a lease,
19 an overseer may redetermine eligibility annually.

20 **Sec. 4. 22 MRSA §4311, sub-§1**, as amended by PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. SSSS, §1, is
21 repealed and the following enacted in its place:

22 **1. Departmental reimbursement.** The department shall reimburse each municipality
23 and each Indian tribe 70% of the direct costs incurred by that municipality or tribe on or
24 after July 1, 2015 and until June 30, 2023 for the general assistance program granted by
25 that municipality or tribe.

26 Beginning July 1, 2023, the department shall reimburse each municipality and each Indian
27 tribe 90% of the direct costs incurred by that municipality or tribe for the general assistance
28 program granted by that municipality or tribe.

29 For the purposes of this subsection, "Indian tribe" has the same meaning as in section 411,
30 subsection 8-A.

31 **Sec. 5. 22 MRSA §4311, sub-§1-B**, as amended by PL 2015, c. 267, Pt. SSSS, §1,
32 is repealed and the following enacted in its place:

33 **1-B. Reimbursement for administrative expenses.** The department shall reimburse
34 each municipality for 5% of the direct costs of paying benefits incurred through its general
35 assistance program.

36 **Sec. 6. 22 MRSA §4323, sub-§6** is enacted to read:

37 **6. Statewide database.** The department shall establish and provide overseers with
38 access to a statewide database for tracking applicants for the general assistance program
39 and expenses relating to the program.

40 **Sec. 7. 22 MRSA §4323, sub-§7** is enacted to read:

1 **7. Assistance with processing applications; hotline.** The department shall provide
2 assistance to municipalities with regard to processing applications for the general assistance
3 program. The department shall establish a hotline that is available 24 hours per day in
4 order to provide consistent, accurate advice to overseers. The department shall respond to
5 requests for assistance within 24 hours.

6 **SUMMARY**

7 This bill:

8 1. Requires an overseer, no later than the 120th day following appointment or election,
9 to complete training on the requirements of the municipal general assistance program;

10 2. Replaces, for determining the maximum level of assistance, the fair market value
11 determination with setting the assistance at the equivalent amount of rental assistance
12 provided for tenant-based housing choice vouchers under Section 8 of the United States
13 Housing Act of 1937 except that the benefit level may not be less than the difference
14 between the applicant's income and 110% of the area's fair market rent;

15 3. Provides that if general assistance is being used to pay rent for an applicant whose
16 rent is subject to a lease an overseer may redetermine the applicant's eligibility annually;

17 4. Increases from 70% to 90% the amount of state reimbursement for the costs of
18 general assistance incurred by a municipality and each Indian tribe;

19 5. Directs the Department of Health and Human Services to reimburse each
20 municipality for 5% of the direct costs of paying benefits incurred through its general
21 assistance program;

22 6. Directs the Department of Health and Human Services to establish and provide
23 overseers with access to a statewide database for tracking applicants for the general
24 assistance program and expenses relating to the program; and

25 7. Requires the Department of Health and Human Services to provide assistance to
26 municipalities with regard to processing applications for the general assistance program
27 and directs the department to establish a hotline that is available 24 hours per day in order
28 to provide consistent, accurate advice to overseers. It also requires the department to
29 respond to requests for assistance within 24 hours.