

CHAPTER 354

AN ACT establishing the “Veterans Affordable Housing Section 8 Voucher Pilot Program.”

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. a. As used in this section:

“Homeless” means an individual without permanent domicile who is living outside, or in a building not meant for human habitation or which the person has no legal right to occupy, or in an emergency shelter, or in a temporary housing program which may include a transitional and supportive housing program if habitation time limits exist, or temporarily in the home of another household, or in a motel.

“Veteran” means any citizen and resident of this State honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances, including medical separations and general discharges under honorable conditions, from service in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States.

b. The Commissioner of Community Affairs shall establish and operate a project-based voucher pilot program, to be known as the “Veterans Affordable Housing Section 8 Voucher Pilot Program,” under the federal Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program for veterans and their families who are confronting homelessness or are residing in unsafe housing.

c. The commissioner shall annually allocate to the pilot program at least 1.5 percent of the unencumbered amount of the budget authority allocated to the Department of Community Affairs’ Housing Choice Voucher Program by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development during each of the five years following the date of enactment of this act.

d. The commissioner shall annually announce the availability of project-based vouchers for veterans pursuant to the “Veterans Affordable Housing Section 8 Voucher Pilot Program” by publication of a request for proposals through an open competitive process.

e. The commissioner shall administer the pilot program in accordance with the provisions of this act and in compliance with the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program regulations and requirements.

f. The commissioner shall not award project-based vouchers under the pilot program for newly constructed or rehabilitated housing units unless at least 50 percent of the units at the premises are reserved for occupancy by veterans or households where a veteran is the head of the household and the veteran or household is currently homeless, at imminent risk of becoming homeless, or the veteran is disabled and in need of access to supportive services.

g. In awarding vouchers under the pilot program, the commissioner shall consider the following factors:

(1) geographic diversity, however, during each of the first two years of operation of the pilot program, the commissioner shall award vouchers representing at least half of the amount allocated to the pilot program in accordance with a preference targeting the location of projects within an eligible municipality, as defined in section 2 of the "Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit Act," P.L.2007, c.346 (C.34:1B-208),

(2) availability of supportive services on site, and

(3) proximity of supportive services to the proposed project location.

h. The commissioner shall report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on the pilot program within two years of its implementation and make any recommendations the commissioner deems appropriate.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved January 16, 2018.