
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 227 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY BLAKE, GREENLEAF, TEPLITZ, FARNESE, SCAVELLO,
KITCHEN, YUDICHAK, SMITH, BREWSTER, TARTAGLIONE, WILLIAMS,
BROWNE, HUGHES, ALLOWAY, RAFFERTY, COSTA, BOSCOLA AND
MCGARRIGLE, JUNE 11, 2015

REFERRED TO URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING, JUNE 11, 2015

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Veterans' Housing Assistance Program; and
2 making appropriations.

3 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
4 hereby enacts as follows:

5 Section 1. Short title.

6 This act shall be shall be known and may be cited as the
7 Preventing Veterans' Homelessness Act.

8 Section 2. Definitions.

9 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
10 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
11 context clearly indicates otherwise:

12 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.

13 "Costs associated with rental." The total costs of rent and
14 utilities, per month, for a residential rental unit.

15 "Department." The Department of Military and Veterans
16 Affairs of the Commonwealth.

17 "Financial assistance." The rental voucher established under

1 section 5(a).

2 "Homeless veteran." A veteran identified and determined by
3 the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to be homeless
4 or at imminent risk of becoming homeless according to guidelines
5 established by the department.

6 "Housing ombudsman." An individual designated by the
7 Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to carry out the duties and
8 responsibilities under section 3(c)(1).

9 "Program." The Veterans' Housing Assistance Program
10 established under section 3.

11 "Veteran." An individual who served on active duty in the
12 United States Armed Forces, including any of the following:

13 (1) A reservist or member of the National Guard who was
14 discharged or released from the service under honorable
15 conditions.

16 (2) A reservist or member of the National Guard who
17 completed an initial term of enlistment or qualifying period
18 of service.

19 (3) A reservist or member of the National Guard who was
20 disabled in the line of duty during training.

21 Section 3. Veterans' Housing Assistance Program.

22 (a) Establishment.--There is established a Veterans' Housing
23 Assistance Program which shall be administered by the agency in
24 coordination with the department.

25 (b) Duties of department.--The department shall do all of
26 the following:

27 (1) Implement a program to identify homeless veterans
28 for purposes of enrolling them in the program.

29 (2) Coordinate with the agency to ensure that homeless
30 veterans are provided the opportunity to receive assistance

1 from the agency's housing ombudsman or financial assistance
2 from the agency.

3 (3) Establish guidelines to assist with the
4 implementation of this act.

5 (c) Duties of agency.--The agency shall do all of the
6 following:

7 (1) Establish a housing ombudsman or contract with a
8 nonprofit organization to provide housing location,
9 relocation and stabilization services to homeless veterans,
10 including negotiating lease agreements with public agencies
11 or private landlords on behalf of a homeless veteran.

12 (2) Provide or contract with a third party to provide
13 credit counseling services to homeless veterans to resolve
14 personal credit issues that may have resulted in a negative
15 credit report.

16 (3) Award financial assistance to eligible homeless
17 veterans determined to be in need of financial assistance to
18 obtain housing.

19 (4) Establish guidelines to assist with the
20 implementation of this act.

21 Section 4. Enrollment.

22 (a) Procedure.--A veteran may enroll in the program by
23 filing an application with the department or the agency. A
24 veteran shall be eligible for enrollment if the veteran meets
25 all of the following:

26 (1) Is homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless
27 as defined in departmental guidelines established under
28 section 3.

29 (2) Cannot obtain adequate housing without the
30 assistance of the department and the agency.

1 (b) Conditions.--The department may require an eligible
2 veteran to engage in or complete any of the following activities
3 as a condition of acceptance into the program:

4 (1) Mental health counseling, including treatment and
5 recovery support.

6 (2) Substance abuse treatment and recovery support,
7 including counseling, treatment planning, recovery coaching
8 and relapse prevention.

9 (3) Integrated, coordinated treatment for co-occurring
10 disorders.

11 (4) Health education, including referrals for medical
12 and dental care.

13 (5) Services or activities designed to promote self-
14 sufficiency, including:

15 (i) Job training.

16 (ii) Assistance in seeking employment.

17 (iii) Job placement services, including job
18 readiness, literacy and skills training.

19 (iv) Credit counseling services and remediation.

20 (v) Benefits advocacy.

21 (vi) Money management.

22 (vii) Parental skills and family support programs.

23 (viii) Other self-help programs deemed necessary by
24 the department.

25 Section 5. Financial assistance.

26 (a) Rental voucher.--The agency may award financial
27 assistance in accordance with section 3(c) to a veteran deemed
28 to be in need of the assistance based on the veteran's personal
29 finances. Financial assistance shall be awarded to an eligible
30 veteran in the form of a housing rental voucher payable to the

1 lessor named in a leasing document executed between the veteran
2 and a landlord.

3 (b) Amount.--The monthly amount of the rental voucher may
4 not exceed the costs associated with the rental or \$1,000,
5 whichever is less.

6 (c) Term.--Financial assistance shall be awarded to a
7 veteran for the term of the lease executed between the veteran
8 and the lessor or for 12 months from the effective date of the
9 lease, whichever is less.

10 Section 6. Renewal.

11 A veteran receiving financial assistance under section 5 may
12 seek an extension of the term of the financial assistance by
13 filing an application with the department. In determining
14 whether to extend the term of the financial assistance, the
15 department shall consider the following concerning the
16 veteran's:

17 (1) Employment status.

18 (2) Personal finances.

19 (3) Compliance with conditions of enrollment placed on
20 the veteran under section 4(b).

21 Section 7. Cooperation.

22 The department and the agency may cooperate with the United
23 States Department of Veterans Affairs or local public housing
24 authorities to carry out the provisions of this act. At the
25 discretion of the department and the agency, the cooperation may
26 include coordinating the program with an existing Federal
27 program that provides funding for housing for homeless veterans,
28 including the United States Department of Housing and Urban
29 Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program.

30 Section 8. Appropriations.

1 (a) Agency.--The sum of \$12,500,000 is appropriated from the
2 General Fund to the agency for the period of July 1, 2015, to
3 June 30, 2016, for purposes of providing financial assistance to
4 homeless veterans and carrying out the agency's responsibilities
5 under this act. Not more than \$500,000 of the funds appropriated
6 under this section may be used for administrative costs incurred
7 by the agency to carry out this act.

8 (b) Department.--The sum of \$500,000 is appropriated from
9 the General Fund to the department for the period of July 1,
10 2015, to June 30, 2016, for purposes of carrying out the
11 department's responsibilities under this act.

12 Section 9. Effective date.

13 This act shall take effect in 60 days.