

REFERENCE TITLE: housing assistance program; appropriation

State of Arizona
Senate
Fifty-fifth Legislature
First Regular Session
2021

SB 1661

Introduced by
Senator Engel

AN ACT

ESTABLISHING THE HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM; APPROPRIATING MONIES.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

2 Section 1. Housing assistance program; oversight committee;
3 annual report; delayed repeal; definitions

4 A. The housing assistance program is established within the Arizona
5 department of housing to support, promote and encourage comprehensive
6 intergovernmental collaborations and the development of strategies to
7 reduce homelessness and preserve housing and to fund programs to increase
8 access to housing, community and legal resources.

9 B. The housing assistance program oversight committee is
10 established consisting of the following members:

11 1. The director of the department of economic security or the
12 director's designee.

13 2. The director of the department of health services or the
14 director's designee.

15 3. The director of the governor's office of youth, faith and
16 families or the director's designee.

17 4. The director of the state department of corrections or the
18 director's designee.

19 5. The director of the administrative office of the courts or the
20 director's designee.

21 6. A presiding justice of the peace or the presiding justice's
22 designee.

23 7. A constable who is appointed by the governor.

24 8. The director of the Arizona department of housing or the
25 director's designee.

26 C. The oversight committee shall do all of the following:

27 1. Review and approve housing assistance program grant awards.

28 2. Develop strategies aimed at reducing homelessness through the
29 preservation of housing.

30 3. Coordinate statewide resources to promote access to housing,
31 community and legal resources for those at risk of losing or those who
32 have lost their homes.

33 D. A nonprofit legal services organization, community action
34 agency, or HUD-approved housing counseling agency may apply to participate
35 in the housing assistance program for up to three fiscal years by
36 submitting a program proposal to the Arizona department of housing. A
37 nonprofit legal services organization, community action agency, or
38 HUD-approved housing counseling agency that receives approval for a
39 three-year program may annually submit a modified spending plan for its
40 approved program.

41 E. A housing navigator program proposal that is submitted by a
42 nonprofit legal services organization, community action agency or
43 HUD-approved housing counseling agency must include:

1 1. A detailed description of the housing related needs of the
2 community to be served.

3 2. A plan for implementing a community-based tenant housing program
4 or a plan that demonstrates the existence of a tenant housing program as
5 an eviction mitigation strategy.

6 3. A plan to use trained housing navigators in collaboration with
7 community service and local governmental agencies.

8 4. Information on the success, compliance and implementation of the
9 most recent grant, if applicable, that the nonprofit legal services
10 organization, community action agency or HUD-approved housing counseling
11 agency received to participate in the housing assistance program.

12 F. The Arizona department of housing shall review and administer
13 the housing navigator program proposals in accordance with the best
14 practices for proposal review and award a funding contract pursuant to
15 section 41-2534, Arizona Revised Statutes, to approved nonprofit legal
16 services organizations, community action agencies or HUD-approved housing
17 counseling agencies, subject to review and approval by the oversight
18 committee. The Arizona department of housing and program proposal
19 reviewers shall use relevant housing, foreclosure and eviction statistics
20 to assess the needs of each program proposal. The Arizona department of
21 housing shall contract to provide program guidelines, curricula for
22 training and support resources for housing navigators to use in
23 implementing the housing assistance program.

24 G. Subject to the review and approval of the oversight committee,
25 the Arizona department of housing shall distribute monies to the nonprofit
26 legal services organizations, community action agencies or HUD-approved
27 housing counseling agencies that are compliant with program requirements
28 and whose program proposals have been approved by the housing assistance
29 program oversight committee.

30 H. The Arizona department of housing shall review program proposals
31 submitted by nonprofit legal services organizations, community action
32 agencies or HUD-approved housing counseling agencies for participation in
33 the housing assistance program and shall select program sites that are
34 eligible to receive funding based on community housing needs. The Arizona
35 department of housing may prioritize program proposals for housing
36 assistance program grants to nonprofit legal services organizations,
37 community action agencies or HUD-approved housing counseling agencies that
38 have agreements to share the cost of housing navigators with governmental
39 agencies, courts or other housing service providers.

40 I. On or before November 1 of each year, the Arizona department of
41 housing shall evaluate the effectiveness of all the approved program
42 proposals submitted pursuant to this section within the housing assistance
43 program and report on the activities of the program and the participants
44 in the housing assistance program to the president of the senate, the
45 speaker of the house of representatives and the governor and shall provide

1 a copy of this report to the secretary of state. The evaluation and
2 report shall include survey results from participating community services
3 and data from participating individuals on the impact of participating in
4 the housing assistance program. The Arizona department of housing shall
5 establish data guidelines for housing assistance program participants to
6 follow in reporting pursuant to this subsection.

7 J. The Arizona department of housing shall adopt a housing
8 assistance program guidance manual that requires a dispute resolution
9 process to be included in the service agreement entered into by a
10 nonprofit legal services organization, community action agency or
11 HUD-approved housing counseling agency that submits a program proposal and
12 receives a housing assistance program grant from the Arizona department of
13 housing.

14 K. Monies received by a nonprofit legal services organization,
15 community action agency or HUD-approved housing counseling agency under
16 the program shall be spent to implement the approved program proposals.

17 L. On or before October 1 of each year, the Arizona department of
18 housing shall submit to the governor, the president of the senate and the
19 speaker of the house of representatives a report containing a detailed
20 description of the number of housing navigators hired, the geographic
21 distribution of the housing navigators, the number of tenants served and
22 the outcomes achieved by the pilot program and shall provide a copy of the
23 report to the secretary of state.

24 M. This section is repealed from and after June 30, 2024.

25 N. For the purposes of this section:

26 1. "Housing assistance program" means a program that is designed to
27 provide Arizona homeowners and tenants with knowledge and skills
28 pertaining to owner and tenant rights and responsibilities, housing law
29 and housing-related legal processes and to reduce homelessness and
30 increase housing stability by improving access to housing-related programs
31 and services.

32 2. "Housing navigator" means a housing or legal professional who is
33 employed to provide community outreach, education and resources related to
34 general housing matters, effective tenancy, leases and rental agreements,
35 eviction and foreclosure processes and referrals to housing programs.
36 Housing navigators who are licensed to practice law in this state must
37 maintain professional liability insurance consistent with the requirements
38 established by the department of administration.

39 3. "HUD" means the United States department of housing and urban
40 development.

41 4. "Tenant" means a person against whom an eviction action has been
42 filed.

