

HB.1354; SB.855 Section-by-Section Summary – Rep. Joan Meschino, Sen. Brendan Crighton

Executive Summary: This bill aligns existing resources to create a Massachusetts Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool (MFSHP), a nimble pot of public and private funds to help meet the complex housing and health needs of individuals, youth, and families experiencing homelessness; to expand supportive housing and services; and to enable funds to get out quickly and equitably to those who need it most.

SECTION 1: Outlines overview, background, and problem to be addressed.

SECTION 2: Amends the General Laws by inserting chapter 121H after chapter 121G.

Section 1: Definitions.

- *Applicant* - a city, municipality or continuum of care that receives funds under the program.
- *Chronic homelessness* - as defined by HUD in the Chronically Homeless Final Rule.
- *Continuum of care* - has the same meaning as defined in Section 578.3 of Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations.
- *Coordinated entry system (CES)* - a centralized or coordinated assessment system designed to coordinate program participant intake, assessment, and referrals.
- *Department* - the department of housing and community development (DHCD).
- *Equity Framework* - the Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response guidance.
- *Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)* – a database used to capture homelessness information.
- *Homeless or homelessness* - has the same meaning as “homeless” defined federally.
- *HUD* - United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- *Intermediary* - a third-party nonprofit organization that does not provide direct services.
- *Permanent housing* - a structure or set of structures with subsidized or unsubsidized rental housing units subject to applicable landlord-tenant law, with no limit on length of stay, and no requirement to participate in supportive services as a condition of access to or continued occupancy in the housing.
- *Permanent supportive housing* - permanent housing that is occupied by the target population and that is linked to onsite or offsite services that assist the supportive housing residents in retaining the housing, improving resident’s health status, and maximizing resident’s ability to live and, when possible, work in the community.
- *Program or MFSHP* - the Massachusetts Flexible Supportive Housing Subsidy Pool Program established in the bill.
- *Rental assistance* - a rental subsidy.
- *Subrecipient* - a unit of local government or a private nonprofit or for-profit organization.
- *Target population* - people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity and who have a disabling condition.
- *Trauma Informed Care (TIC)* - a coordinated, cross-system strategy that has aligned policies, practices and services for supporting healing and resilience.

Section 2: Establishes that DHCD will administer the MFSHP. In doing so, it will issue at least 2 notices of funding availability each year and solicit bids from an intermediary through a competitive process to oversee the MFSHP.

Section 3: States that DHCD shall solicit bids for the appointment of the intermediary.

Section 4: Delineates the 9-part scoring rubric from which the intermediary shall make grants available to applicants.

Section 5: States that applicants will be compared with similar applicants based on demographic and geographic data.

Section 6: Defines the 4 requirements that applications need to meet.

Section 7: Establishes the 6 eligible activities for which an applicant can use funding.

Section 8: States that the eligibility criteria in Section 7 must be determined to fit the target population, focus on geographic areas of high need and equity issues, streamline the housing placement process, and provide services to address complex social and behavioral health scenarios.

Section 9: Outlines the criteria for funding allocation and requires DHCD to track outcomes with the department of public health.

Section 10: Requires DHCD to coordinate with the executive office of health and human services to establish clear pathways for permanent supportive housing projects alongside the existing funding structures.

Section 11: Specifies that the MFSHP will prioritize individuals, youth and young adults, and families, and in serving these populations, DHCD shall work with other state agencies to use data to identify and prioritize the highest need sub-populations.

Section 12: Requires DHCD to partner with the office of victim assistance to create guidelines and draft a plan addressing 4 outlined criteria.

Section 13: Requires DHCD to use the eligibility criteria of the MassHealth Behavioral Health Justice Initiative to partner with the department of correction to establish guidelines and allocate funds to serve those eligible.

Section 14: Requires DHCD to partner with the office of elder affairs to establish guidelines and allocate funds to serve older adults.

Section 15: Allows DHCD to adjust target populations based on data.

Section 16: Outlines the intermediary's roles and responsibilities.

Section 17: Outlines the creation of a statewide Funder's Collaborative to End Homelessness to be established between state agencies and private, non-profit entities and further defines the roles and responsibilities of the Collaborative.

Section 18: Establishes the Flexible Supportive Housing Subsidy Pool Program Trust Fund for the purposes of funding the MFSHP and its associated activities and details the mechanics of the Trust Fund.