

STATE OF NEW YORK

9657--A

IN ASSEMBLY

February 3, 2020

Introduced by M. of A. CYMBROWITZ, BARNWELL, DE LA ROSA, JACOBSON, LENTOL, L. ROSENTHAL, KIM, HUNTER, ORTIZ, BLAKE, QUART, JOYNER, WALKER, HEVESI, AUBRY, EPSTEIN, MOSLEY, DINOWITZ, SIMOTAS, NIOU, BARRON, REYES, TAYLOR, CRUZ -- read once and referred to the Committee on Housing -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the public housing law, in relation to establishing the housing access voucher program

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The public housing law is amended by adding a new article 14 to read as follows:

ARTICLE 14

HOUSING ACCESS VOUCHER PROGRAM

Section 600. Legislative findings.

601. Definitions.

602. Housing access voucher program.

603. Eligibility.

604. Funding allocation and distribution.

605. Payment of housing vouchers.

606. Leases and tenancy.

607. Rental obligation.

608. Monthly assistance payment.

609. Inspection of units by public housing agencies.

610. Rent.

611. Vacated units.

612. Leasing of units owned by a public housing agency.

613. Verification of income.

614. Division of an assisted family.

615. Maintenance of effort.

616. Vouchers statewide.

617. Applicable codes.

618. Housing choice.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD15091-04-0

1 § 600. Legislative findings. The legislature finds that it is in the
2 public interest and an obligation of the state to ensure that individ-
3 uals and families are not rendered homeless because of an inability to
4 pay the cost of housing, and that the state should aid individuals and
5 families who are homeless or face an imminent loss of housing in obtain-
6 ing and maintaining suitable permanent housing in accordance with the
7 provisions of this article.

8 § 601. Definitions. For the purposes of this article, the following
9 terms shall have the following meanings:

10 1. "homeless" means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime
11 residence; having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or
12 private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping
13 accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned build-
14 ing, bus or train station, airport, campground, or other place not meant
15 for human habitation; living in a supervised publicly or privately oper-
16 ated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements
17 (including hotels and motels paid for by federal, state or local govern-
18 ment programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations,
19 congregate shelters, or transitional housing); exiting an institution
20 where an individual or family has resided and lacking a regular fixed
21 and adequate nighttime residence upon release or discharge; being a
22 homeless family with children or unaccompanied youth defined as homeless
23 under federal statute; having experienced a long-term period without
24 living independently in permanent housing or having experienced persist-
25 ent instability as measured by frequent moves and being reasonably
26 expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time
27 because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental
28 health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence
29 or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability,
30 multiple barriers to employment, or other dangerous or life-threatening
31 conditions, including conditions that relate to violence against an
32 individual or a family member.

33 2. "imminent loss of housing" means having received a verified rent
34 demand or a petition for eviction; having received a court order result-
35 ing from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that
36 they must leave their housing; facing loss of housing due to hazardous
37 conditions, including but not limited to asbestos, lead exposure, mold,
38 and radon; having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a
39 hotel or motel and lacking the resources necessary to stay; facing loss
40 of the primary nighttime residence, which may include living in the home
41 of another household, where the owner or renter of the housing will not
42 allow the individual or family to stay, provided further, that an
43 assertion from an individual or family member alleging such loss of
44 housing or homelessness shall be sufficient to establish eligibility; or
45 fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual
46 assault, stalking, human trafficking or other dangerous or life-threat-
47 ening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a
48 family member, provided further that an assertion from an individual or
49 family member alleging such abuse and loss of housing shall be suffi-
50 cient to establish eligibility.

51 3. "public housing agency" means any county, municipality, or other
52 governmental entity or public body that is authorized to administer any
53 public housing program (or an agency or instrumentality of such an enti-
54 ty), and any other public or private non-profit entity that administers
55 any other public housing program or assistance.

1 4. "family" means a group of persons residing together. Such group
2 includes, but is not limited to a family with or without children (a
3 child who is temporarily away from the home because of placement in
4 foster care is considered a member of the family) or the remaining
5 member of a tenant family. The commissioner shall have the discretion to
6 determine if any other group of persons qualifies as a family.

7 5. "individual" means a single person.

8 6. "owner" means any private person or any entity, including a cooper-
9 ative, an agency of the federal government, or a public housing agency,
10 having the legal right to lease or sublease dwelling units.

11 7. "dwelling unit" means a single-family dwelling, including attached
12 structures such as porches and stoops; or a single-family dwelling unit
13 in a structure that contains more than one separate residential dwelling
14 unit, and in which each such unit is used or occupied, or intended to be
15 used or occupied, in whole or in part, as the residence of one or more
16 persons.

17 8. "income" means income from all sources of each member of the house-
18 hold, including all wages, tips, over-time, salary, welfare assistance,
19 social security payments, child support payments, returns on invest-
20 ments, and recurring gifts. The term "income" shall not include:
21 employment income from children under eighteen years of age, employment
22 income from children eighteen years of age or older who are full-time
23 students, foster care payments, sporadic gifts, groceries provided by
24 persons not living in the household, supplemental nutrition assistance
25 program (food stamp) benefits, earned income disregard (EID), or the
26 earned income tax credit.

27 9. "adjusted income" means income minus any deductions allowable by
28 the rules promulgated by the commissioner pursuant to this article.
29 Mandatory deductions shall include:

30 (a) four hundred eighty dollars for each dependent;

31 (b) four hundred dollars for any elderly family member and/or a family
32 member with a disability;

33 (c) any reasonable child care expenses necessary to enable a member of
34 the family to be employed or to further his or her education; and

35 (d) The sum total of unreimbursed medical expenses for each elderly
36 family member and/or family member with a disability plus unreimbursed
37 attendant care and/or medical apparatus expenses for each member of the
38 family with a disability which are necessary for any member of the fami-
39 ly (including the member who is a person with a disability) to be
40 employed greater than three percent of the annual income.

41 10. "reasonable rent" means rent not more than the rent charged on
42 comparable units in the private unassisted market and rent charged for
43 comparable unassisted units in the premises.

44 11. "fair market rent" means the fair market rent for each rental area
45 as promulgated annually by the United States department of housing and
46 urban development's office of policy development and research pursuant
47 to 42 U.S.C. 1437f.

48 12. "voucher" means a document issued by the housing trust fund corpo-
49 ration pursuant to this article to an individual or family selected for
50 admission to the housing access voucher program, which describes such
51 program and the procedures for approval of a unit selected by the family
52 and states the obligations of the individual or family under the
53 program.

54 13. "lease" means a written agreement between an owner and a tenant
55 for the leasing of a dwelling unit to the tenant. The lease establishes
56 the conditions for occupancy of the dwelling unit by an individual or

1 family with housing assistance payments under a contract between the
2 owner and the public housing agency.

3 14. "dependent" means any member of the family who is neither the head
4 of household, nor the head of the household's spouse, and who is:

5 (a) under the age of eighteen;

6 (b) a person with a disability; or

7 (c) a full-time student.

8 15. "elderly" means a person sixty-two years of age or older.

9 16. "child care expenses" means expenses relating to the care of chil-
10 dren under the age of thirteen.

11 17. "federal poverty level" means a measure of income promulgated
12 annually by the United States department of health and human services
13 pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 9902 that establishes a threshold for poverty in
14 the United States based on the size of household.

15 18. "severely rent burdened" means those individuals and families who
16 pay more than fifty percent of their income in rent as defined by the
17 United States census bureau.

18 19. "disability" means:

19 (a) the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by
20 reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which
21 can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be
22 expected to last for a continuous period of not less than twelve months;
23 or

24 (b) in the case of an individual who has attained the age of fifty-
25 five and is blind, the inability by reason of such blindness to engage
26 in substantial gainful activity requiring skills or abilities comparable
27 to those of any gainful activity in which they have previously engaged
28 with some regularity and over a substantial period of time; or

29 (c) a physical, mental, or emotional impairment which:

30 (i) is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration;

31 (ii) substantially impedes his or her ability to live independently;
32 and

33 (iii) is of such a nature that such ability could be improved by more
34 suitable housing conditions; or

35 (d) a developmental disability that is a severe, chronic disability of
36 an individual that:

37 (i) is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination
38 of mental and physical impairments;

39 (ii) is manifested before the individual attains age twenty-two;

40 (iii) is likely to continue indefinitely;

41 (iv) results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of
42 the following areas of major life activity:

43 (A) self-care;

44 (B) receptive and expressive language;

45 (C) learning;

46 (D) mobility;

47 (E) self-direction;

48 (F) capacity for independent living; or

49 (G) economic self-sufficiency; and

50 (v) reflects the individual's need for a combination and sequence of
51 special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized
52 supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended
53 duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

54 § 602. Housing access voucher program. The commissioner, subject to
55 the appropriation of funds for this purpose, shall implement a program
56 of rental assistance in the form of housing vouchers for eligible indi-

viduals and families who are homeless or who face an imminent loss of housing in accordance with the provisions of this article. The housing trust fund corporation shall issue vouchers pursuant to this article, subject to appropriation of funds for this purpose, and may contract with the division of housing and community renewal to administer any aspect of this program in accordance with the provisions of this article. The commissioner shall designate public housing agencies in the state to make vouchers available to such individuals and families and to administer other aspects of the program in accordance with the provisions of this article.

§ 603. Eligibility. Eligibility for the housing access voucher program shall be limited to individuals and families who are homeless or facing imminent loss of housing. The commissioner shall promulgate standards for determining eligibility for this program.

1. An individual or family shall be eligible for this program if they are homeless or facing imminent loss of housing and have an income of no more than two hundred fifty percent of the federal poverty level.

2. An individual or family in receipt of rental assistance under this program shall be no longer financially eligible for assistance under this program when thirty percent of the individual or family's adjusted income is greater than or equal to the total rent for the dwelling unit.

3. When an individual or family becomes financially ineligible for rental assistance under this program pursuant to subdivision two of this section, the individual or family shall retain rental assistance for a period no shorter than one year.

4. Income eligibility shall be verified no less frequently than annually.

§ 604. Funding allocation and distribution. 1. Funding shall be allocated by the commissioner in each county and the city of New York in proportion to the number of households in each county or the city of New York who are severely rent burdened.

2. The commissioner shall be responsible for distributing the funds allocated in each county or the city of New York among public housing agencies operating in each county or in the city of New York.

3. At least fifty percent of funds distributed in each county or in the city of New York shall be allocated to individuals or families who are homeless.

4. At least eighty-seven and one-half percent of funds distributed in each county or in the city of New York shall be allocated to individuals and families whose income does not exceed the federal poverty level.

5. No funds may be allocated under this program to individuals or families whose income exceeds two hundred fifty percent of the federal poverty level.

§ 605. Payment of housing vouchers. The housing voucher shall be paid directly to any owner under a contract between the owner of the dwelling unit to be occupied by the voucher recipient and the appropriate public housing agency. A housing assistance payment contract entered into pursuant to this section shall establish the maximum monthly rent (including utilities and all maintenance and management charges) which the owner is entitled to receive for each dwelling unit with respect to which such assistance payments are to be made. The maximum monthly rent shall not exceed one hundred ten percent nor be less than ninety percent of the fair market rent for the rental area in which it is located. Fair market rent for a rental area shall be published not less than annually by the commissioner and shall be made available on the website of New York state homes and community renewal.

1 § 606. Leases and tenancy. Each housing assistance payment contract
2 entered into by a public housing agency and the owner of a dwelling unit
3 shall provide:

4 1. that the lease between the tenant and the owner shall be for a term
5 of not less than one year, except that the public housing agency may
6 approve a shorter term for an initial lease between the tenant and the
7 dwelling unit owner if the public housing agency determines that such
8 shorter term would improve housing opportunities for the tenant and if
9 such shorter term is considered to be a prevailing local market prac-
10 tice;

11 2. that the dwelling unit owner shall offer leases to tenants assisted
12 under this article that:

13 (a) are in a standard form used in the locality by the dwelling unit
14 owner; and

15 (b) contain terms and conditions that:

16 (i) are consistent with state and local law; and

17 (ii) apply generally to tenants in the property who are not assisted
18 under this article;

19 (c) shall provide that during the term of the lease, the owner shall
20 not terminate the tenancy except for serious or repeated violation of
21 the terms and conditions of the lease, for violation of applicable state
22 or local law, or for other good cause, and in the case of an owner who
23 is an immediate successor in interest pursuant to foreclosure during the
24 term of the lease vacating the property prior to sale shall not consti-
25 tute other good cause, except that the owner may terminate the tenancy
26 effective on the date of transfer of the unit to the owner if the owner:

27 (i) will occupy the unit as a primary residence; and

28 (ii) has provided the tenant a notice to vacate at least ninety days
29 before the effective date of such notice;

30 (d) shall provide that any termination of tenancy under this section
31 shall be preceded by the provision of written notice by the owner to the
32 tenant specifying the grounds for that action, and any relief shall be
33 consistent with applicable state and local law;

34 3. that any unit under an assistance contract originated under this
35 article shall only be occupied by the individual or family designated in
36 said contract and shall be the designated individual or family's primary
37 residence. Contracts shall not be transferable between units and shall
38 not be transferable between recipients. A family or individual may
39 transfer their voucher to a different unit under a new contract pursuant
40 to this article;

41 4. that an owner shall not charge more than a reasonable rent as
42 defined in section six hundred one of this article.

43 § 607. Rental obligation. 1. Each recipient of housing assistance
44 under the housing access voucher program's monthly rental obligation
45 shall be the greater of:

46 (a) thirty percent of the monthly adjusted income of the family or
47 individual; or

48 (b) If the family or individual is receiving payments for welfare
49 assistance from a public agency and a part of those payments, adjusted
50 in accordance with the actual housing costs of the family, is specif-
51 ically designated by that agency to meet the housing costs of the fami-
52 ly, the portion of those payments that is so designated. These payments
53 include, but are not limited to any shelter assistance or housing
54 assistance administered by any federal, state or local agency.

55 2. If the rent for the individual or family (including the amount
56 allowed for tenant-paid utilities) exceeds the applicable payment stand-

ard established under subdivision one of this section, the monthly assistance payment for the family shall be equal to the amount by which the applicable payment standard exceeds the greater of amounts under paragraphs (a) and (b) of subdivision one of this section.

§ 608. Monthly assistance payment. 1. The amount of the monthly assistance payment with respect to any dwelling unit shall be the difference between the maximum monthly rent which the contract provides that the owner is to receive for the unit and the rent the individual or family is required to pay under section six hundred seven of this article. Reviews of income shall be made no less frequently than annually.

2. The commissioner shall establish maximum rent levels for different sized rentals in each rental area in a manner that promotes the use of the program in all localities based on the fair market rental of the rental area. Rental areas shall be delineated by county, excepting that the city of New York shall be considered one rental area. The commissioner may rely on data or other information promulgated by any other state or federal agency in determining the rental areas and fair market rent.

3. The payment standard for each size of dwelling unit in a rental area shall not be less than ninety percent and shall not exceed one hundred ten percent of the fair market rent established in section six hundred one of this article for the same size of dwelling unit in the same rental area, except that the commissioner shall not be required as a result of a reduction in the fair market rent to reduce the payment standard applied to a family continuing to reside in a unit for which the family was receiving assistance under this article at the time the fair market rent was reduced.

§ 609. Inspection of units by public housing agencies. 1. Initial inspection.

(a) For each dwelling unit for which a housing assistance payment contract is established under this article, the public housing agency (or other entity pursuant to section six hundred twelve of this article) shall inspect the unit before any assistance payment is made to determine whether the dwelling unit meets the housing quality standards under subdivision two of this section, except as provided in paragraph (b) or (c) of this subdivision.

(b) In the case of any dwelling unit that is determined, pursuant to an inspection under paragraph (a) of this subdivision, not to meet the housing quality standards under subdivision two of this section, assistance payments may be made for the unit notwithstanding subdivision three of this section if failure to meet such standards is a result only of non-life-threatening conditions, as such conditions are established by the commissioner. A public housing agency making assistance payments pursuant to this paragraph for a dwelling unit shall, thirty days after the beginning of the period for which such payments are made, withhold any assistance payments for the unit if any deficiency resulting in noncompliance with the housing quality standards has not been corrected by such time. The public housing agency shall recommence assistance payments when such deficiency has been corrected, and may use any payments withheld to make assistance payments relating to the period during which payments were withheld.

(c) In the case of any property that within the previous twenty-four months has met the requirements of an inspection that qualifies as an alternative inspection method pursuant to subdivision five of this section, a public housing agency may authorize occupancy before the inspection under paragraph (a) of this subdivision has been completed,

1 and may make assistance payments retroactive to the beginning of the
2 lease term after the unit has been determined pursuant to an inspection
3 under paragraph (a) of this subdivision to meet the housing quality
4 standards under subdivision two of this section. This paragraph may not
5 be construed to exempt any dwelling unit from compliance with the
6 requirements of subdivision four of this section.

7 2. The housing quality standards under this subdivision shall be stan-
8 dards for safe and habitable housing established:

9 (a) by the commissioner for purposes of this subdivision; or

10 (b) by local housing codes or by codes adopted by public housing agen-
11 cies that:

12 (i) meet or exceed housing quality standards, except that the commis-
13 sioner may waive the requirement under this subparagraph to significant-
14 ly increase access to affordable housing and to expand housing opportu-
15 nities for families assisted under this article, except where such
16 waiver could adversely affect the health or safety of families assisted
17 under this article; and

18 (ii) do not severely restrict housing choice.

19 3. The determination required under subdivision one of this section
20 shall be made by the public housing agency (or other entity, as provided
21 in section six hundred twelve of this article) pursuant to an inspection
22 of the dwelling unit conducted before any assistance payment is made for
23 the unit. Inspections of dwelling units under this subdivision shall be
24 made before the expiration of the fifteen day period beginning upon a
25 request by the resident or landlord to the public housing agency or, in
26 the case of any public housing agency that provides assistance under
27 this article on behalf of more than one thousand two hundred fifty fami-
28 lies, before the expiration of a reasonable period beginning upon such
29 request. The performance of the agency in meeting the fifteen day
30 inspection deadline shall be taken into consideration in assessing the
31 performance of the agency.

32 4. (a) Each public housing agency providing assistance under this
33 article (or other entity, as provided in section six hundred twelve of
34 this article) shall, for each assisted dwelling unit, make inspections
35 not less often than annually during the term of the housing assistance
36 payments contract for the unit to determine whether the unit is main-
37 tained in accordance with the requirements under subdivision one of this
38 section.

39 (b) The requirements under paragraph (a) of this subdivision may be
40 complied with by use of inspections that qualify as an alternative
41 inspection method pursuant to subdivision five of this section.

42 (c) The public housing agency (or other entity) shall retain the
43 records of the inspection for a reasonable time, as determined by the
44 commissioner.

45 5. An inspection of a property shall qualify as an alternative
46 inspection method for purposes of this subdivision if:

47 (a) the inspection was conducted pursuant to requirements under a
48 federal, state, or local housing program; and

49 (b) pursuant to such inspection, the property was determined to meet
50 the standards or requirements regarding housing quality or safety appli-
51 cable to properties assisted under such program, and, if a non-state
52 standard or requirement was used, the public housing agency has certi-
53 fied to the commissioner that such standard or requirement provides the
54 same (or greater) protection to occupants of dwelling units meeting such
55 standard or requirement as would the housing quality standards under
56 subdivision two of this section.

6. Upon notification to the public housing agency, by an individual or family (on whose behalf tenant-based rental assistance is provided under this article) or by a government official, that the dwelling unit for which such assistance is provided does not comply with the housing quality standards under subdivision two of this section, the public housing agency shall inspect the dwelling unit:

(a) in the case of any condition that is life-threatening, within twenty-four hours after the agency's receipt of such notification, unless waived by the commissioner in extraordinary circumstances; and

(b) in the case of any condition that is not life-threatening, within a reasonable time frame, as determined by the commissioner.

7. The commissioner shall establish procedural guidelines and performance standards to facilitate inspections of dwelling units and conform such inspections with practices utilized in the private housing market. Such guidelines and standards shall take into consideration variations in local laws and practices of public housing agencies and shall provide flexibility to agencies appropriate to facilitate efficient provision of assistance under this section.

§ 610. Rent. 1. The rent for dwelling units for which a housing assistance payment contract is established under this article shall be reasonable in comparison with rents charged for comparable dwelling units in the private, unassisted local market.

2. A public housing agency (or other entity, as provided in section six hundred twelve of this article) shall, at the request of an individual or family receiving tenant-based assistance under this article, assist that individual or family in negotiating a reasonable rent with a dwelling unit owner. A public housing agency (or other such entity) shall review the rent for a unit under consideration by the individual or family (and all rent increases for units under lease by the individual or family) to determine whether the rent (or rent increase) requested by the owner is reasonable. If a public housing agency (or other such entity) determines that the rent (or rent increase) for a dwelling unit is not reasonable, the public housing agency (or other such entity) shall not make housing assistance payments to the owner under this subdivision with respect to that unit.

3. If a dwelling unit for which a housing assistance payment contract is established under this article is exempt from local rent control provisions during the term of that contract, the rent for that unit shall be reasonable in comparison with other units in the rental area that are exempt from local rent control provisions.

4. Each public housing agency shall make timely payment of any amounts due to a dwelling unit owner under this section. The housing assistance payment contract between the owner and the public housing agency may provide for penalties for the late payment of amounts due under the contract, which shall be imposed on the public housing agency in accordance with generally accepted practices in the local housing market.

5. Unless otherwise authorized by the commissioner, each public housing agency shall pay any penalties from administrative fees collected by the public housing agency, except that no penalty shall be imposed if the late payment is due to factors that the commissioner determines are beyond the control of the public housing agency.

§ 611. Vacated units. If an assisted family vacates a dwelling unit for which rental assistance is provided under a housing assistance payment contract before the expiration of the term of the lease for the unit, rental assistance pursuant to such contract may not be provided for the unit after the month during which the unit was vacated.

1 § 612. Leasing of units owned by a public housing agency. 1. If an
2 eligible individual or family assisted under this article leases a
3 dwelling unit (other than a public housing dwelling unit) that is owned
4 by a public housing agency administering assistance to that individual
5 or family under this section, the commissioner shall require the unit of
6 general local government or another entity approved by the commissioner,
7 to make inspections required under section six hundred nine of this
8 article and rent determinations required under section six hundred ten
9 of this article. The agency shall be responsible for any expenses of
10 such inspections and determinations.

11 2. For purposes of this section, the term "owned by a public housing
12 agency" means, with respect to a dwelling unit, that the dwelling unit
13 is in a project that is owned by such agency, by an entity wholly
14 controlled by such agency, or by a limited liability company or limited
15 partnership in which such agency (or an entity wholly controlled by such
16 agency) holds a controlling interest in the managing member or general
17 partner. A dwelling unit shall not be deemed to be owned by a public
18 housing agency for purposes of this section because the agency holds a
19 fee interest as ground lessor in the property on which the unit is situ-
20 ated, holds a security interest under a mortgage or deed of trust on the
21 unit, or holds a non-controlling interest in an entity which owns the
22 unit or in the managing member or general partner of an entity which
23 owns the unit.

24 § 613. Verification of income. The commissioner shall establish proce-
25 dures which are appropriate and necessary to assure that income data
26 provided to the public housing agency and owners by individuals and
27 families applying for or receiving assistance under this article is
28 complete and accurate. In establishing such procedures, the commissioner
29 shall randomly, regularly, and periodically select a sample of families
30 to authorize the commissioner to obtain information on these families
31 for the purpose of income verification, or to allow those families to
32 provide such information themselves. Such information may include, but
33 is not limited to, data concerning unemployment compensation and federal
34 income taxation and data relating to benefits made available under the
35 social security act, 42 U.S.C. 301 et seq., the food and nutrition act
36 of 2008, 7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq., or title 38 of the United State Code.
37 Any such information received pursuant to this section shall remain
38 confidential and shall be used only for the purpose of verifying incomes
39 in order to determine eligibility of individuals and families for bene-
40 fits (and the amount of such benefits, if any) under this article.

41 § 614. Division of an assisted family. 1. In those instances where a
42 family assisted under this article becomes divided into two otherwise
43 eligible individuals or families due to divorce, legal separation or the
44 division of the family, where the new units cannot agree as to which new
45 unit should continue to receive the assistance, and where there is no
46 determination by a court, the public housing authority shall consider
47 the following factors to determine which of the individuals or families
48 will continue to be assisted:

- 49 (a) which of the new units has custody of dependent children;
50 (b) which family member was the head of household when the voucher was
51 initially issued (listed on the initial application);
52 (c) the composition of the new units and which unit includes elderly
53 or disabled members;
54 (d) whether domestic violence was involved in the breakup of the fami-
55 ly unit;
56 (e) which family members remain in the unit; and

1 (f) recommendations of social service professionals.

2 2. Documentation of these factors will be the responsibility of the
3 requesting parties. If documentation is not provided, the public housing
4 agency will terminate assistance on the basis of failure to provide
5 information necessary for a recertification.

6 § 615. Maintenance of effort. Any funds made available pursuant to
7 this article shall not be used to offset or reduce the amount of funds
8 previously expended for the same or similar programs in a prior year in
9 any county or in the city of New York, but shall be used to supplement
10 any prior year's expenditures. The commissioner may grant an exception
11 to this requirement if any county, municipality, or other governmental
12 entity or public body can affirmatively show that such amount of funds
13 previously expended is in excess of the amount necessary to provide
14 assistance to all individuals and families within the area in which the
15 funds were previously expended who are homeless or facing an imminent
16 loss of housing.

17 § 616. Vouchers statewide. Notwithstanding section six hundred six of
18 this article, any voucher issued pursuant to this article may be used
19 for housing anywhere in the state. The commissioner shall inform voucher
20 holders that a voucher may be used anywhere in the state and, to the
21 extent practicable, the commissioner shall assist voucher holders in
22 finding housing in the area of their choice.

23 § 617. Applicable codes. Housing eligible for participation in the
24 homeless access voucher program shall comply with applicable state and
25 local health, housing, building and safety codes.

26 § 618. Housing choice. 1. The commissioner shall administer the home-
27 less access voucher program under this article to promote housing choice
28 for voucher holders. The commissioner shall affirmatively promote fair
29 housing to the extent possible under this program.

30 2. Nothing in this article shall lessen or abridge any fair housing
31 obligations promulgated by municipalities, localities, or any other
32 applicable jurisdiction.

33 § 2. This act shall take effect on the first of October next succeed-
34 ing the date on which it shall have become a law. Effective immediately,
35 the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation neces-
36 sary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are
37 authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.