

STATE OF NEW YORK

7636--C

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

May 25, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. SOLAGES, SHRESTHA, DINOWITZ, SIMON, BLANKENBUSH, REYES -- read once and referred to the Committee on Housing -- recommitted to the Committee on Housing in accordance with Assembly Rule 3, sec. 2 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee -- again reported from said committee with amendments, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee -- again reported from said committee with amendments, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the real property law, in relation to establishing the homeowner protection program

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

1 Section 1. The real property law is amended by adding a new section
2 265-c to read as follows:

3 § 265-c. Homeowner protection program. 1. Legislative intent. The
4 legislature declares that the establishment of the homeowner protection
5 program (HOPP) is necessary to ensure continuation of New York's invest-
6 ment in its statewide network of non-profit civil legal services provid-
7 ers and housing counseling agencies offering a range of homeownership
8 retention and preservation services to homeowners in every county in the
9 state. The program is also necessary to ensure that the statutory
10 mandates of sections thirteen hundred three and thirteen hundred four of
11 the real property actions and proceedings law and rule thirty-four
12 hundred eight of the civil practice law and rules are fulfilled, so that
13 free housing counseling and legal services are available to homeowners
14 as provided for by sections thirteen hundred three and thirteen hundred
15 four of the real property actions and proceedings law in every county,
16 and so that legal services are available to assist homeowners answering
17 complaints and participating in mandatory settlement conferences pursu-

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

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1 ant to rule thirty-four hundred eight of the civil practice law and
2 rules.

3 2. Counseling and legal representation of individuals who are facing
4 loss of their home or threats to homeownership. (a) Within one year of
5 the effective date of this section, the department of law shall estab-
6 lish the homeowner protection program to ensure the availability of free
7 housing counseling and legal services to homeowners for the purposes of
8 mitigating threats to homeownership including, but not limited to,
9 homeownership retention, home preservation, estate planning, as a tool
10 for preventing theft of real property and other scams targeted to home-
11 owners, preventing avoidable foreclosures and displacement, preserving
12 home equity, preserving homeownership, especially in communities of
13 color, and for any other purposes related to preserving homeownership.
14 Such program shall be funded by annual appropriation by the legislature.

15 (b) The department of law shall provide grants to eligible not-for-
16 profit housing counseling organizations and legal services organizations
17 to provide services under the program. Such services shall include, but
18 not be limited to, assistance with loss mitigation and loan and workout
19 applications and negotiations; assistance in applying for assistance
20 programs for homeowners; assistance with resolving property tax, utility
21 and building code violation debts and liens; representation in mortgage
22 and tax and utility lien foreclosure litigation, limited scope represen-
23 tation at settlement conferences pursuant to rule thirty-four hundred
24 eight of the civil practice law and rules; assistance to unrepresented
25 litigants with answers and motions in judicial foreclosure proceedings
26 and brief advice; assistance to homeowners victimized by deed fraud,
27 distressed property consultant, partition and other scammers; and
28 redress of predatory and discriminatory lending, abusive mortgage
29 servicing, and property flipping, including affirmative litigation and
30 administrative complaints with federal, state and local fair housing
31 agencies; and for whatever other purpose deemed necessary by the depart-
32 ment of law to preserve homeownership.

33 3. Program administration. (a) The department of law shall establish
34 criteria for selection of grant applications, review applications and
35 make awards, and exercise and perform such other functions as are
36 related to the purposes of this section.

37 (b) The department of law shall make one-year grants, within the
38 amounts appropriated for that purpose, to not-for-profit housing coun-
39 seling organizations serving homeowners at risk of losing their homes,
40 and legal services organizations, to provide counseling services and
41 legal representation of persons who reside in the state of New York who
42 are facing threats to homeownership.

43 (c) The department of law shall make one-year grants, within the
44 amounts appropriated for that purpose, to ensure that housing counseling
45 and legal services are available free of charge to homeowners in every
46 county of the state and to ensure that the statutory mandates of
47 sections thirteen hundred three and thirteen hundred four of the real
48 property actions and proceedings law and rule thirty-four hundred eight
49 of the civil practice law and rules are fulfilled.

50 (d) The department of law shall make one-year grants, within the
51 amounts appropriated for that purpose, to ensure adequate training,
52 technical assistance and support is provided to the not-for-profit hous-
53 ing counseling and legal services organizations providing services under
54 this section, and to ensure the management of grants and supportive
55 services including, but not limited to, toll-free hotlines, dedicated

1 outreach, technical expertise and other assistance is made available to
2 the organizations providing services.

3 4. Reporting. Each not-for-profit housing counseling organization and
4 legal services organization receiving a grant under this section shall
5 at a minimum report to the attorney general no later than sixty days
6 after the end of each one-year grant. Such report shall include an
7 accounting of the funds received by the grant and the services provided.

8 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.