

# STATE OF NEW YORK

568

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

January 5, 2023

Introduced by Sens. KAVANAGH, BAILEY, BRISPORT, BROUK, CLEARE, COMRIE, COONEY, GIANARIS, GOUNARDES, HARCKHAM, HINCHEY, HOYLMAN, JACKSON, KENNEDY, KRUEGER, LIU, MANNION, MAY, MAYER, MYRIE, PARKER, PERSAUD, RAMOS, RIVERA, RYAN, SALAZAR, SANDERS, SEPULVEDA, SKOUFIS, STAVISKY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development

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-A to read as follows:

### ARTICLE 14-A

#### HOUSING ACCESS VOUCHER PROGRAM

##### Section 605. Legislative findings.

##### 606. Definitions.

##### 607. Housing access voucher program.

##### 608. Eligibility.

##### 609. Funding allocation and distribution.

##### 610. Payment of housing vouchers.

##### 611. Leases and tenancy.

##### 612. Rental obligation.

##### 613. Monthly assistance payment.

##### 614. Inspection of units.

##### 615. Rent.

##### 616. Vacated units.

##### 617. Leasing of units owned by a housing access voucher local administrator.

##### 618. Verification of income.

##### 619. Division of an assisted family.

##### 620. Maintenance of effort.

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

LBD01985-01-3

621. Vouchers statewide.

622. Applicable codes.

623. Housing choice.

§ 605. Legislative findings. The legislature finds that it is in the public interest and an obligation of the state to ensure that individuals and families are not rendered homeless because of an inability to pay the cost of housing, and that the state should aid individuals and families who are homeless or face an imminent loss of housing in obtaining and maintaining suitable permanent housing in accordance with the provisions of this article.

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

1. "Homeless" means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, campground, or other place not meant for human habitation; living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by federal, state or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, or transitional housing); exiting an institution where an individual or family has resided and lacking a regular fixed and adequate nighttime residence upon release or discharge; being a homeless family with children or unaccompanied youth defined as homeless under 42 U.S.C. § 11302(a); having experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing or having experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves and being reasonably expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, multiple barriers to employment, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions, including conditions that relate to violence against an individual or a family member.

2. "Imminent loss of housing" means having received a verified rent demand or a petition for eviction; having received a court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave their housing; facing loss of housing due to a court order to vacate the premises due to hazardous conditions, which may include but not be limited to asbestos, lead exposure, mold, and radon; having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and lacking the resources necessary to stay; facing loss of the primary nighttime residence, which may include living in the home of another household, where the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay, provided further, that an assertion from an individual or family member alleging such loss of housing or homelessness shall be sufficient to establish eligibility; or fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, provided further that an assertion from an individual or family member alleging such abuse and loss of housing shall be sufficient to establish eligibility.

3. "Public housing agency" means any county, municipality, or other governmental entity or public body that is authorized to administer any

1 public housing program (or an agency or instrumentality of such an enti-  
2 ty), and any other public or private non-profit entity that administers  
3 any other public housing program or assistance.

4 4. "Section 8 local administrator" means an organization that adminis-  
5 ters the Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers program within a community,  
6 county or region, or statewide, on behalf of and under contract with the  
7 housing trust fund corporation.

8 5. "Housing access voucher local administrator" means a public housing  
9 agency, as defined in subdivision three of this section, or Section 8  
10 local administrator designated to administer the housing access voucher  
11 program within a community, county or region, or statewide, on behalf of  
12 and under contract with the housing trust fund corporation.

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

19 7. "Owner" means any private person or any entity, including a cooper-  
20 ative, an agency of the federal government, or a public housing agency,  
21 having the legal right to lease or sublease dwelling units.

22 8. "Dwelling unit" means a single-family dwelling, including attached  
23 structures such as porches and stoops; or a single-family dwelling unit  
24 in a structure that contains more than one separate residential dwelling  
25 unit, and in which each such unit is used or occupied, or intended to be  
26 used or occupied, in whole or in part, as the residence of one or more  
27 persons.

28 9. "Income" means income from all sources of each member of the house-  
29 hold, including all wages, tips, over-time, salary, welfare assistance,  
30 social security payments, child support payments, returns on invest-  
31 ments, and recurring gifts. The term "income" shall not include:  
32 employment income from children under eighteen years of age, employment  
33 income from children eighteen years of age or older who are full-time  
34 students, foster care payments, sporadic gifts, groceries provided by  
35 persons not living in the household, supplemental nutrition assistance  
36 program (food stamp) benefits, earned income disregard (EID), or the  
37 earned income tax credit.

38 10. "Adjusted income" means income minus any deductions allowable by  
39 the rules promulgated by the commissioner pursuant to this article.  
40 Mandatory deductions shall include:

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

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

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

46 (d) The sum total of unreimbursed medical expenses for each elderly  
47 family member and/or family member with a disability plus unreimbursed  
48 attendant care and/or medical apparatus expenses for each member of the  
49 family with a disability which are necessary for any member of the fami-  
50 ly (including the member of the family who is a person with a disabili-  
51 ty) to be employed, that is greater than three percent of the annual  
52 income; and

53 (e) expenses related to child support payments due and owing.

54 11. "Reasonable rent" means rent not more than the rent charged on  
55 comparable units in the private unassisted market and rent charged for  
56 comparable unassisted units in the premises.

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

13. "Voucher" means a document issued by the housing trust fund corporation pursuant to this article to an individual or family selected for admission to the housing access voucher program, which describes such program and the procedures for approval of a unit selected by the family and states the obligations of the individual or family under the program.

14. "Lease" means a written agreement between an owner and a tenant for the leasing of a dwelling unit to the tenant. The lease establishes the conditions for occupancy of the dwelling unit by an individual or family with housing assistance payments under a contract between the owner and the housing access voucher local administrator.

15. "Dependent" means any member of the family who is neither the head of household, nor the head of the household's spouse, and who is:

- (a) under the age of eighteen;
- (b) a person with a disability; or
- (c) a full-time student.

16. "Elderly" means a person sixty-two years of age or older.

17. "Child care expenses" means expenses relating to the care of children under the age of thirteen.

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

19. "Disability" means:

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

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

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

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

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

and

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

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

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

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

(iii) is likely to continue indefinitely;

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

(A) self-care;

(B) receptive and expressive language;

(C) learning;

(D) mobility;

(E) self-direction;

1 (F) capacity for independent living; or  
2 (G) economic self-sufficiency; and  
3 (v) reflects the individual's need for a combination and sequence of  
4 special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized  
5 supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended  
6 duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

7 § 607. Housing access voucher program. The commissioner, subject to  
8 the appropriation of funds for this purpose, shall implement a program  
9 of rental assistance in the form of housing vouchers for eligible indi-  
10 viduals and families who are homeless or who face an imminent loss of  
11 housing in accordance with the provisions of this article. The housing  
12 trust fund corporation shall issue vouchers pursuant to this article,  
13 subject to appropriation of funds for this purpose, and may contract  
14 with the division of housing and community renewal to administer any  
15 aspect of this program in accordance with the provisions of this arti-  
16 cle. The commissioner shall designate housing access voucher local  
17 administrators in the state to make vouchers available to such individ-  
18 uals and families and to administer other aspects of the program in  
19 accordance with the provisions of this article. In the city of New York,  
20 the housing access voucher local administrator shall be the New York  
21 city department of housing preservation and development, or the New York  
22 city housing authority, or both.

23 § 608. Eligibility. The commissioner shall promulgate standards for  
24 determining eligibility for assistance under this program. Individuals  
25 and families who meet the standards shall be eligible regardless of  
26 immigration status. Eligibility shall be limited to individuals and  
27 families who are homeless or facing imminent loss of housing. Housing  
28 access voucher local administrators may rely on correspondence from a  
29 homeless shelter or similar institution or program to determine whether  
30 an applicant qualifies as a homeless individual or family.

31 1. An individual or family shall be eligible for this program if they  
32 are homeless or facing imminent loss of housing and have an income of no  
33 more than fifty percent of the area median income, as defined by the  
34 federal department of housing and urban development.

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

40 3. When an individual or family becomes financially ineligible for  
41 rental assistance under this program pursuant to subdivision two of this  
42 section, the individual or family shall retain rental assistance for a  
43 period no shorter than one year, subject to appropriation of funds for  
44 this purpose.

45 4. Income eligibility shall be verified prior to a public housing  
46 agency's initial determination to provide rental assistance for this  
47 program and upon determination of such eligibility, an individual or  
48 family shall annually certify their income for the purpose of determin-  
49 ing continued eligibility and any adjustments to such rental assistance.

50 5. The commissioner shall collaborate with the office of temporary  
51 and disability assistance and other state and city agencies to allow  
52 public housing agencies to access income information for the purpose of  
53 verifying an individual's or family's income.

54 § 609. Funding allocation and distribution. 1. Funding shall be allo-  
55 cated by the commissioner in each county and the city of New York in  
56 proportion to the number of households in each county or the city of New



1 York who are severely rent burdened based on data published by the  
2 United States census bureau.

3 2. The commissioner shall be responsible for distributing the funds  
4 allocated in each county or the city of New York among housing access  
5 voucher local administrators operating in each county or in the city of  
6 New York.

7 3. At least fifty percent of funds distributed in each county or in  
8 the city of New York shall be allocated to individuals or families who  
9 are homeless. If a county is unable to fully distribute all funds allo-  
10 cated pursuant to this program under this section, such county may spend  
11 fewer than fifty percent of its funds for those who are homeless,  
12 provided that all eligible applicant individuals or families who are  
13 homeless have been served.

14 4. At least eighty-five percent of funds distributed in each county or  
15 in the city of New York for individuals or families who are homeless  
16 pursuant to subdivision three of this section shall be allocated to  
17 individuals and families whose income does not exceed thirty percent of  
18 the area median income as defined by the federal department of housing  
19 and urban development.

20 5. Of the funds allocated to individuals and families who face an  
21 imminent loss of housing, priority shall be given to individuals and  
22 families who have formerly experienced homelessness, including those who  
23 have previously received a temporary rental voucher from the state, a  
24 locality, or a non-profit organization or who currently have a rental  
25 assistance voucher that is due to expire within six months of applica-  
26 tion.

27 § 610. Payment of housing vouchers. The housing voucher shall be paid  
28 directly to any owner under a contract between the owner of the dwelling  
29 unit to be occupied by the voucher recipient and the appropriate housing  
30 access voucher local administrator. A housing assistance payment  
31 contract entered into pursuant to this section shall establish the maxi-  
32 mum monthly rent (including utilities and all maintenance and management  
33 charges) which the owner is entitled to receive for each dwelling unit  
34 with respect to which such assistance payments are to be made. The maxi-  
35 mum monthly rent shall not exceed one hundred ten percent nor be less  
36 than ninety percent of the fair market rent for the rental area in which  
37 it is located. Fair market rent for a rental area shall be published  
38 not less than annually by the commissioner and shall be made available  
39 on the website of New York state homes and community renewal.

40 § 611. Leases and tenancy. Each housing assistance payment contract  
41 entered into by a housing access voucher local administrator and the  
42 owner of a dwelling unit shall provide:

43 1. that the lease between the tenant and the owner shall be for a term  
44 of not less than one year, except that the housing access voucher local  
45 administrator may approve a shorter term for an initial lease between  
46 the tenant and the dwelling unit owner if the housing access voucher  
47 local administrator determines that such shorter term would improve  
48 housing opportunities for the tenant and if such shorter term is consid-  
49 ered to be a prevailing local market practice;

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

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

54 (b) contain terms and conditions that:

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

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

3 (c) shall provide that during the term of the lease, the owner shall  
4 not terminate the tenancy except for serious or repeated violation of  
5 the terms and conditions of the lease, for violation of applicable state  
6 or local law, or for other good cause, and in the case of an owner who  
7 is an immediate successor in interest pursuant to foreclosure during the  
8 term of the lease vacating the property prior to sale shall not consti-  
9 tute other good cause, except that the owner may terminate the tenancy  
10 effective on the date of transfer of the unit to the owner if the owner:

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

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

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

18 3. that any unit under an assistance contract originated under this  
19 article shall only be occupied by the individual or family designated in  
20 said contract and shall be the designated individual or family's primary  
21 residence. Contracts shall not be transferable between units and shall  
22 not be transferable between recipients. A family or individual may  
23 transfer their voucher to a different unit under a new contract pursuant  
24 to this article;

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

27 § 612. Rental obligation. 1. The monthly rental obligation for an  
28 individual or family receiving housing assistance pursuant to the hous-  
29 ing access voucher program shall be the greater of:

30 (a) thirty percent of the monthly adjusted income of the family or  
31 individual; or

32 (b) If the family or individual is receiving payments for welfare  
33 assistance from a public agency and a part of those payments, adjusted  
34 in accordance with the actual housing costs of the family, is specif-  
35 ically designated by that agency to meet the housing costs of the fami-  
36 ly, the portion of those payments that is so designated. These payments  
37 include, but are not limited to any shelter assistance or housing  
38 assistance administered by any federal, state or local agency.

39 2. If the rent for the individual or family (including the amount  
40 allowed for tenant-paid utilities) exceeds the applicable payment stand-  
41 ard established under subdivision three of section six hundred thirteen  
42 of this article, the monthly assistance payment for the family shall be  
43 equal to the amount by which the applicable payment standard exceeds the  
44 greater of amounts under paragraphs (a) and (b) of subdivision one of  
45 this section.

46 § 613. Monthly assistance payment. 1. The amount of the monthly  
47 assistance payment with respect to any dwelling unit shall be the  
48 difference between the maximum monthly rent which the contract provides  
49 that the owner is to receive for the unit and the rent the individual or  
50 family is required to pay under section six hundred twelve of this arti-  
51 cle. Reviews of income shall be made no less frequently than annually.

52 2. The commissioner shall establish maximum rent levels for different  
53 sized rentals in each rental area in a manner that promotes the use of  
54 the program in all localities based on the fair market rental of the  
55 rental area. Rental areas shall be delineated by county, excepting that  
56 the city of New York shall be considered one rental area. The commis-

1 sioner may rely on data or other information promulgated by any other  
2 state or federal agency in determining the rental areas and fair market  
3 rent.

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

13 § 614. Inspection of units. 1. Initial inspection.

14 (a) For each dwelling unit for which a housing assistance payment  
15 contract is established under this article, the housing access voucher  
16 local administrator (or other entity pursuant to section six hundred  
17 seventeen of this article) shall inspect the unit before any assistance  
18 payment is made to determine whether the dwelling unit meets the housing  
19 quality standards under subdivision two of this section, except as  
20 provided in paragraph (b) or (c) of this subdivision.

21 (b) In the case of any dwelling unit that is determined, pursuant to  
22 an inspection under paragraph (a) of this subdivision, not to meet the  
23 housing quality standards under subdivision two of this section, assist-  
24 ance payments may be made at the discretion of a housing access voucher  
25 local administrator for the unit notwithstanding subdivision three of  
26 this section if failure to meet such standards is a result only of non-  
27 life-threatening conditions, as such conditions are established by the  
28 commissioner. A housing access voucher local administrator making  
29 assistance payments pursuant to this paragraph for a dwelling unit  
30 shall, thirty days after the beginning of the period for which such  
31 payments are made, withhold any assistance payments for the unit if any  
32 deficiency resulting in noncompliance with the housing quality standards  
33 has not been corrected by such time. The housing access voucher local  
34 administrator shall recommence assistance payments when such deficiency  
35 has been corrected, and may use any payments withheld to make assistance  
36 payments relating to the period during which payments were withheld.

37 (c) In the case of any property that within the previous twenty-four  
38 months has met the requirements of an inspection that qualifies as an  
39 alternative inspection method pursuant to subdivision five of this  
40 section, a housing access voucher local administrator may authorize  
41 occupancy before the inspection under paragraph (a) of this subdivision  
42 has been completed, and may make assistance payments retroactive to the  
43 beginning of the lease term after the unit has been determined pursuant  
44 to an inspection under paragraph (a) of this subdivision to meet the  
45 housing quality standards under subdivision two of this section. This  
46 paragraph may not be construed to exempt any dwelling unit from compli-  
47 ance with the requirements of subdivision four of this section.

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

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

51 (b) by local housing codes or by codes adopted by the housing access  
52 voucher local administrator that:

53 (i) meet or exceed housing quality standards, except that the commis-  
54 sioner may waive the requirement under this subparagraph to significant-  
55 ly increase access to affordable housing and to expand housing opportu-  
56 nities for families assisted under this article, except where such



1 waiver could adversely affect the health or safety of families assisted  
2 under this article; and

3 (ii) do not severely restrict housing choice.

4 3. The determination required under subdivision one of this section  
5 shall be made by the housing access voucher local administrator (or  
6 other entity, as provided in section six hundred seventeen of this arti-  
7 cle) pursuant to an inspection of the dwelling unit conducted before any  
8 assistance payment is made for the unit. Inspections of dwelling units  
9 under this subdivision shall be made before the expiration of the  
10 fifteen day period beginning upon a request by the resident or landlord  
11 to the housing access voucher local administrator or, in the case of any  
12 housing access voucher local administrator that provides assistance  
13 under this article on behalf of more than one thousand two hundred fifty  
14 families, before the expiration of a reasonable period beginning upon  
15 such request. The performance of the housing access voucher local admin-  
16 istrator in meeting the fifteen day inspection deadline shall be taken  
17 into consideration in assessing the performance of the housing access  
18 voucher local administrator.

19 4. (a) Each housing access voucher local administrator providing  
20 assistance under this article (or other entity, as provided in section  
21 six hundred seventeen of this article) shall, for each assisted dwelling  
22 unit, make inspections not less often than annually during the term of  
23 the housing assistance payments contract for the unit to determine  
24 whether the unit is maintained in accordance with the requirements under  
25 subdivision one of this section.

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

29 (c) The housing access voucher local administrator (or other entity)  
30 shall retain the records of the inspection for a reasonable time, as  
31 determined by the commissioner.

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

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

36 (b) pursuant to such inspection, the property was determined to meet  
37 the standards or requirements regarding housing quality or safety appli-  
38 cable to properties assisted under such program, and, if a non-state  
39 standard or requirement was used, the housing access voucher local  
40 administrator has certified to the commissioner that such standard or  
41 requirement provides the same (or greater) protection to occupants of  
42 dwelling units meeting such standard or requirement as would the housing  
43 quality standards under subdivision two of this section.

44 6. Upon notification to the housing access voucher local administra-  
45 tor, by an individual or family (on whose behalf tenant-based rental  
46 assistance is provided under this article) or by a government official,  
47 that the dwelling unit for which such assistance is provided does not  
48 comply with the housing quality standards under subdivision two of this  
49 section, the housing access voucher local administrator shall inspect  
50 the dwelling unit:

51 (a) in the case of any condition that is life-threatening, within  
52 twenty-four hours after the housing access voucher local administrator's  
53 receipt of such notification, unless waived by the commissioner in  
54 extraordinary circumstances; and

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

1 In conducting such an inspection, the housing access voucher local  
2 administrator may, at its discretion, require evidence from the owner of  
3 the physical condition of a unit, including, but not limited to photo-  
4 graphs, signed work orders, and contractor bills in lieu of the housing  
5 access voucher local administrator conducting a physical inspection.

6 7. The commissioner shall establish procedural guidelines and perform-  
7 ance standards to facilitate inspections of dwelling units and conform  
8 such inspections with practices utilized in the private housing market.  
9 Such guidelines and standards shall take into consideration variations  
10 in local laws and practices and shall provide flexibility to the housing  
11 access voucher local administrator appropriate to facilitate efficient  
12 provision of assistance under this section.

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

17 2. A housing access voucher local administrator (or other entity, as  
18 provided in section six hundred seventeen of this article) shall, at the  
19 request of an individual or family receiving tenant-based assistance  
20 under this article, assist that individual or family in negotiating a  
21 reasonable rent with a dwelling unit owner. A housing access voucher  
22 local administrator (or other such entity) shall review the rent for a  
23 unit under consideration by the individual or family (and all rent  
24 increases for units under lease by the individual or family) to deter-  
25 mine whether the rent (or rent increase) requested by the owner is  
26 reasonable. If a housing access voucher local administrator (or other  
27 such entity) determines that the rent (or rent increase) for a dwelling  
28 unit is not reasonable, the housing access voucher local administrator  
29 (or other such entity) shall not make housing assistance payments to the  
30 owner under this subdivision with respect to that unit.

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

36 4. Each housing access voucher local administrator shall make timely  
37 payment of any amounts due to a dwelling unit owner under this section,  
38 subject to appropriation of funds for this purpose. The housing assist-  
39 ance payment contract between the owner and the housing access voucher  
40 local administrator may provide for penalties for the late payment of  
41 amounts due under the contract, which shall be imposed on the housing  
42 access voucher local administrator in accordance with generally accepted  
43 practices in the local housing market.

44 5. Unless otherwise authorized by the commissioner, each housing  
45 access voucher local administrator shall pay any penalties from adminis-  
46 trative fees collected by the housing access voucher local administra-  
47 tor, except that no penalty shall be imposed if the late payment is due  
48 to factors that the commissioner determines are beyond the control of  
49 the housing access voucher local administrator.

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

55 § 617. Leasing of units owned by a housing access voucher local admin-  
56 istrator. 1. If an eligible individual or family assisted under this

1 article leases a dwelling unit (other than a public housing dwelling  
2 unit) that is owned by a housing access voucher local administrator  
3 administering assistance to that individual or family under this  
4 section, the commissioner shall require the unit of general local  
5 government or another entity approved by the commissioner, to make  
6 inspections required under section six hundred fourteen of this article  
7 and rent determinations required under section six hundred fifteen of  
8 this article. The housing access voucher local administrator shall be  
9 responsible for any expenses of such inspections and determinations,  
10 subject to the appropriation of funds for this purpose.

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

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

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

51 (a) which of the new units has custody of dependent children;  
52 (b) which family member was the head of household when the voucher was  
53 initially issued as listed on the initial application;  
54 (c) the composition of the new units and which unit includes elderly  
55 or disabled members;

1 (d) whether domestic violence was involved in the breakup of the fami-  
2 ly unit;

3 (e) which family members remain in the unit; and

4 (f) recommendations of social service professionals.

5 2. Documentation of these factors will be the responsibility of the  
6 requesting parties. If documentation is not provided, the housing access  
7 voucher local administrator will terminate assistance on the basis of  
8 failure to provide information necessary for a recertification.

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

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

26 § 622. Applicable codes. Housing eligible for participation in the  
27 housing access voucher program shall comply with applicable state and  
28 local health, housing, building and safety codes.

29 § 623. Housing choice. 1. The commissioner shall administer the hous-  
30 ing access voucher program under this article to promote housing choice  
31 for voucher holders. The commissioner shall affirmatively promote fair  
32 housing to the extent possible under this program.

33 2. Nothing in this article shall lessen or abridge any fair housing  
34 obligations promulgated by municipalities, localities, or any other  
35 applicable jurisdiction.

36 § 2. This act shall take effect on the first of April next succeeding  
37 the date on which it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the  
38 addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary  
39 for the implementation of this act on its effective date are authorized  
40 to be made and completed on or before such effective date.