ASSEMBLY, No. 5412

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman BRIAN BERGEN
District 26 (Morris and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Senior Home Modification Grant Program to fund accessibility modification to homes of low-income senior citizens.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT establishing the Senior Home Modification Grant Program, supplementing chapter 27D of Title 52 of the Revised Statutes, and amending P.L.2004, c.140.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. (New section) a. As used in this section:

"Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Community Affairs.

"Department" means the Department of Community Affairs.

"Grant program" means the Senior Home Modification Grant Program, established pursuant to subsection b. of this section.

"Low-income senior citizen" means a person of 62 years of age or older who occupies a household with a total current annual household income equal to 50 percent or less of the area median income for a household of the same size and composition.

"Nursing home" means a long-term care facility licensed pursuant to P.L.1971, c.136 (C.26:2H-1 et seq.), as well as the distinct part of another health care facility or continuing care retirement community that is licensed to provide skilled nursing care services pursuant to P.L.1971, c.136 (C.26:2H-1 et seq.).

"Rural or underserved community" means a "State designated underserved area," as defined pursuant to section 1 of P.L.2009, c,145 (C.18A:71C-32), or an area included within the boundaries of a municipality that has a population of 30,000 inhabitants or less and a population density less than 4,000 persons per square mile, according to the most recent federal decennial census.

"Senior home modification assistance" means financial assistance for a low-income senior citizen to complete an improvement to the senior citizen's primary residence pursuant to subsection b. of this section.

b. There is established, in the department, the Senior Home Modification Grant Program to facilitate the ability of low-income senior citizens to remain safely in their homes. The commissioner shall award grants for senior home modification assistance through the program, upon application by a low-income senior citizen to the department, for home modifications that enhance accessibility, including, but not limited to, the installation of:

(1) ramps;

(2) grab bars;

(3) stair lifts; and

(4) bathroom accessibility enhancements.

c. The commissioner shall set aside a portion of the funds available for the purposes of the grant program for low-income senior citizens residing in rural or underserved communities.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined <u>thus</u> is new matter.

d. The commissioner, on an annual basis, shall submit a report to the Governor, and the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), that shall include, but shall not be limited to, information on the amount of expenditures through the grant program, the number of applications received, and the number of nursing home placements prevented.

2. Section 1 of P.L.2004, c.140 (C.52:27D-287.1) is amended to read as follows:

1. The Commissioner of Community Affairs shall establish a State rental assistance program for low income individuals or households. This program shall be in addition to and supplement any existing programs established pursuant to the "Prevention of Homelessness Act (1984)," P.L.1984, c.180 (C.52:27D-280 et al.).

a. The program shall provide rental assistance grants comparable to the federal section 8 program, but shall be available only to State residents who are not currently holders of federal section 8 vouchers.

b. Assistance to an individual or household under the State program shall be terminated upon the award of federal section 8 rental assistance to the same individual or household.

c. The program shall reserve a portion of the grants for assistance to senior citizens aged 62 or older who otherwise meet the criteria of subsection a. of this section.

d. The program shall reserve a portion of the grants for assistance to veterans who have successfully completed the Veterans Transitional Housing Program, or "Veterans Haven," a vocational and transitional housing program for homeless veterans administered by the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs.

e. The program shall reserve a portion of the funds available to it for tenant-based vouchers to veterans, other than those veterans eligible for assistance pursuant to subsection d. of this section.

f. The program shall reserve a portion of the funds available to it to establish and administer a program comparable to the federal section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program, authorized pursuant to Subpart M of Part 982 of Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations, to enable a household to use a program voucher to buy a home by providing monthly homeownership assistance or a single down payment assistance grant.

g. The program shall reserve a portion of the funds available to it to establish and administer a program comparable to the federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Family Self-Sufficiency Program, authorized pursuant to Section 1437u of Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations, to help families achieve economic independence and reduce dependence on welfare assistance and rental subsidies.

h. The program shall reserve a portion of the funds available to it to establish and administer a Home Repair Emergency Assistance Fund, to assist families with costs of necessary home repairs and other homeownership expenses over the course of their participation.

i. The program shall reserve a portion of the funds available to it to administer the Senior Home Modification Grant Program, established pursuant to subsection b. of section 1 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

(cf: P.L.2024, c.98, s.1)

3. The Commissioner of Community Affairs shall adopt rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) to effectuate the provisions of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill). The rules and regulations shall, at a minimum, set forth the requirements for application submissions, the criteria for application selections, the eligible uses of financial assistance.

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the Senior Home Modification Grant Program (grant program) in the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to fund accessibility modifications to homes of low-income senior citizens, and facilitate their ability to remain safely in their homes.

Through the grant program, the Commissioner of Community Affairs (commissioner) is to award grants for improvements including the installation of ramps, grab bars, stair lifts, and bathroom accessibility enhancements. A portion of grant program funds are to be set aside for low-income senior citizens residing in rural or underserved communities, as defined in the bill. The bill requires the commissioner to submit an annual report to the Governor, and the Legislature, providing information on the amounts expended through the grant program, the number of applications received, and the number of nursing home placements prevented.

In order to fund the grant program, the bill directs DCA to reserve for the grant program a portion of the funding provided for the State Rental Assistance Program.