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H.P. 974 House of Representatives, March 30, 2021

Resolve, Directing the Maine State Housing Authority To Allow Rental Housing Owners To Apply for Emergency Rental Relief Assistance

(EMERGENCY)

Reference to the Committee on Labor and Housing suggested and ordered printed.

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative DRINKWATER of Milford.
Cosponsored by Representatives: ARATA of New Gloucester, BLIER of Buxton.

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Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the State is currently in a prolonged state of emergency in which a global pandemic has caused widespread unemployment; and

Whereas, thousands of renters statewide who have become unemployed through no fault of their own have been unable to meet their rental commitments to their landlords; and

Whereas, many landlords in the State have not received rent from their unemployed tenants, causing hardship and the inability to pay utilities, bills and mortgage payments; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Maine State Housing Authority to allow rental housing owners to apply for emergency rental relief assistance. Resolved: That the Maine State Housing Authority shall allow rental housing owners to apply for emergency rental relief assistance from the emergency rental assistance program funded by the United States Department of the Treasury in response to the coronavirus disease 2019, also known as COVID-19, and the related pandemic. A rental housing owner who has experienced lost rental income due to the COVID-19 pandemic may apply for emergency rental relief assistance on behalf of a tenant of the rental housing owner who is not current on the tenant's rent and is unwilling or unable to apply for assistance under the program. For purposes of this section, "lost rental income" does not include rent lawfully withheld or not paid by the tenant under the provisions of Title 14, chapter 710. Intentionally falsifying lost rental income is a violation of the crime of theft by deception under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 17-A, section 354.

Sec. 2. Retroactivity. Resolved: That a housing rental owner may apply for emergency rental relief assistance under section 1 for lost rental income incurred on or after March 15, 2020.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This resolve directs the Maine State Housing Authority to allow rental housing owners to apply for COVID-19 emergency rental relief assistance for lost rental revenue due to tenants who are not current on their rent and are unable or unwilling to apply for assistance on their own.