

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3904

To establish a pilot program to improve the family self-sufficiency program,
and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 11, 2024

Mr. REED (for himself and Mrs. BRITT) introduced the following bill; which
was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and
Urban Affairs

A BILL

To establish a pilot program to improve the family self-
sufficiency program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Helping More Families
5 Save Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY ESCROW EXPANSION**
7 **PILOT PROGRAM.**

8 Section 23 of the United States Housing Act of 1937
9 (42 U.S.C. 1437u) is amended by adding at the end the
10 following:

1 “(p) ESCROW EXPANSION PILOT PROGRAM.—

2 “(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

3 “(A) COVERED FAMILY.—The term ‘cov-
4 ered family’ means an eligible family enrolled in
5 the pilot program established under this sub-
6 section.

7 “(B) ESCROW ALLOCATION.—The term
8 ‘escrow allocation’ means an account awarded
9 under this subsection for which the awarded eli-
10 gible entity shall use to create escrow accounts
11 in accordance with paragraph (3).

12 “(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall es-
13 tablish a pilot program under which the Secretary,
14 through a competitive process, awards escrow alloca-
15 tions to eligible entities to establish and fund escrow
16 accounts in accordance with this subsection.

17 “(3) ESCROW ACCOUNTS.—

18 “(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity
19 awarded an escrow allocation under this sub-
20 section—

21 “(i) shall establish, on behalf of each
22 covered family, an interest-bearing escrow
23 account and place into the account an
24 amount equal to any increase in the
25 amount of rent paid by the family in ac-

1 cordance with the provisions of section 3 or
2 8(o), as applicable, that is attributable to
3 increases in earned income by the covered
4 family; and

5 “(ii) notwithstanding any other provi-
6 sion of law, may use funds it controls
7 under section 8 or 9 for purposes of mak-
8 ing the escrow deposit for covered families
9 assisted under, or residing in units assisted
10 under, section 8 or 9 of this title, respec-
11 tively, provided such funds are offset by
12 the increase in the amount of rent paid by
13 the covered family.

14 “(B) INCOME LIMITATION.—The Secretary
15 shall not escrow any amounts for any covered
16 family whose adjusted income exceeds 80 per-
17 cent of the area median income.

18 “(C) WITHDRAWALS.—Amounts in an es-
19 crow account established for a covered family
20 under this paragraph may be withdrawn by the
21 covered family after the covered family ceases
22 to receive income assistance under Federal or
23 State welfare programs, after 5 years from the
24 date of the establishment of the escrow account,
25 and under other circumstances in which the

1 Secretary determines an exception for good
2 cause is warranted.

3 “(4) EFFECT OF INCREASES IN FAMILY IN-
4 COME.—Any increase in the earned income of a cov-
5 ered family during the enrollment of the family in
6 the pilot program established under this subsection
7 may not be considered as income or a resource for
8 purposes of eligibility of the family for other bene-
9 fits, or amount of benefits payable to the family,
10 under any program administered by the Secretary.

11 “(5) APPLICATION.—

12 “(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity
13 seeking an award under this subsection shall
14 submit to the Secretary an application—

15 “(i) at such time, in such manner,
16 and containing such information as the
17 Secretary may require; and

18 “(ii) that includes the number of pro-
19 posed covered families to be served by the
20 eligible entity under this subsection.

21 “(B) GEOGRAPHIC AND ENTITY VARI-
22 ETY.—The Secretary shall ensure that eligible
23 entities awarded escrow allocations under this
24 subsection—

1 “(i) are located across various regions
2 of the United States and in both urban
3 and rural areas; and

4 “(ii) vary by size and type, including
5 both public housing agencies and private
6 owners of projects receiving project-based
7 rental assistance under section 8.

8 “(6) NOTIFICATION AND OPT-OUT.—An eligible
9 entity receiving an award under this subsection
10 shall—

11 “(A) notify covered families of their enroll-
12 ment in the pilot program under this sub-
13 section;

14 “(B) provide covered families with a de-
15 tailed description of the pilot program, includ-
16 ing how the pilot program will impact their rent
17 and finances; and

18 “(C) provide those covered families with
19 the ability to elect not to participate in the pilot
20 program—

21 “(i) not less than 1 month before the
22 date on which the escrow account is estab-
23 lished under paragraph (3); and

24 “(ii) at any point during the duration
25 of the pilot program.

1 “(7) NUMBER OF ESCROW ALLOCATIONS.—

2 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall
3 award not more than 5,000 escrow allocations.

4 “(B) NUMBER OF ENTITIES.—The Sec-
5 retary shall seek to award escrow allocations to
6 not less than 25 eligible entities.

7 “(8) MAXIMUM RENTS.—During the term of
8 participation by a covered family in the pilot pro-
9 gram under this subsection, the amount of rent paid
10 by the enrolled family shall be calculated under the
11 rental provisions of section 3 or 8(o), as applicable.

12 “(9) PILOT PROGRAM TIMELINE.—

13 “(A) AWARDS.—Not later than 18 months
14 after the date of enactment of this subsection,
15 the Secretary shall award escrow allocations.

16 “(B) ESTABLISHMENT OF ACCOUNTS.—An
17 eligible entity awarded an escrow allocation
18 under this subsection shall—

19 “(i) not later than 6 months after re-
20 ceiving the escrow allocation, establish es-
21 crow accounts under paragraph (3) for
22 covered families; and

23 “(ii) maintain those escrow accounts
24 for not less than 5 years and not more

1 than 7 years after the date on which the
2 escrow account is established.

3 “(C) ACCESS TO FUNDS.—A covered fam-
4 ily shall be able to access funds in an escrow
5 account established under paragraph (3)—

6 “(i) not earlier than the date that is
7 5 years after, and not later than the date
8 that is 7 years after, the date on which the
9 escrow account is established; or

10 “(ii) on the date the covered family
11 ceases to receive housing assistance under
12 Federal or State programs, if that date is
13 less than 5 years after the date on which
14 the escrow account is established.

15 “(10) NONPARTICIPATION AND HOUSING AS-
16 SISTANCE.—

17 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Assistance under sec-
18 tion 8 or 9 for a family that elects not to par-
19 ticipate in the pilot program shall not be de-
20 layed by reason of such election.

21 “(B) NO TERMINATION.—Housing assist-
22 ance may not be terminated as a consequence
23 of participating in the pilot program for any pe-
24 riod of time.

1 “(11) STUDY.—Not later than 7 years after the
2 date of enactment of this subsection, the Secretary
3 shall conduct a study and submit to the Committee
4 on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Sen-
5 ate and the Committee on Financial Services of the
6 House of Representatives a report on outcomes for
7 covered families under the pilot program under this
8 subsection, which shall evaluate the effectiveness of
9 the pilot program in assisting families to achieve
10 economic independence and self-sufficiency, and the
11 impact supportive services, or the lack thereof, had
12 on individual incomes.

13 “(12) TERMINATION.—The pilot program under
14 this subsection shall terminate on the date that is 10
15 years after the date of enactment of this subsection.

16 “(13) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

17 “(A) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to
18 appropriated to the Secretary for fiscal year
19 2025 \$2,000,000 to carry out this subsection.

20 “(B) AVAILABILITY.—Any amounts appro-
21 priated under this subsection shall remain avail-
22 able until expended.”.

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