

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 5516

To establish a new Housing and Urban Development grant program to provide community land trusts and other community-based housing organizations an incentive to convert vacant housing into readily available housing for unhoused individuals.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 12, 2024

Mr. BOOKER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To establish a new Housing and Urban Development grant program to provide community land trusts and other community-based housing organizations an incentive to convert vacant housing into readily available housing for unhoused individuals.

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 “Vacant Property for
5 the Unhoused Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1 (1) COMMUNITY LAND TRUST.—The term
2 “community land trust” means a nonprofit organiza-
3 tion—

4 (A) the primary purpose of which is the
5 development and maintenance of housing that
6 is permanently affordable to low- and moderate-
7 income persons;

8 (B) that is not sponsored or controlled by
9 a for-profit organization;

10 (C) that uses a lease, covenant, agreement,
11 or other enforceable mechanisms to require
12 housing and related improvements on land held
13 by the nonprofit organization to be affordable
14 to low- and moderate-income persons for not
15 less than 30 years; and

16 (D) that retains a right of first refusal or
17 preemptive right to purchase the housing and
18 related improvements on land held by the non-
19 profit organization to maintain long-term af-
20 fordability.

21 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
22 ty” means a community land trust or other commu-
23 nity-based housing organization, including a housing
24 cooperative, mutual housing association, resident-

1 owned community, or other model emphasizing com-
2 munity control, ownership, and representation.

3 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
4 the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

5 (4) SUPPORTIVE SERVICES.—The term “sup-
6 portive services” has the meaning given the term in
7 section 401 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assist-
8 ance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360).

9 (5) UNHOUSED INDIVIDUAL.—The term
10 “unhoused individual” has the meaning given the
11 term “homeless individual” in section 103(a) of the
12 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42
13 U.S.C. 11302).

14 (6) VACANT HOUSING.—The term “vacant
15 housing” means a vacant residential property.

16 (b) FINDING; PURPOSE.—

17 (1) FINDING.—Congress finds that the persist-
18 ence of homelessness, despite the abundance of va-
19 cant houses in the United States, presents an oppor-
20 tunity for community land trusts and other commu-
21 nity-based housing organizations to utilize their va-
22 cant housing resources to create long-term, stable
23 housing for unhoused individuals.

24 (2) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to
25 reduce homelessness by providing grants to commu-

1 nity land trusts and other community-based housing
 2 organizations to convert vacant housing into readily
 3 available housing for individuals experiencing home-
 4 lessness.

5 (c) VACANT PROPERTY FOR THE UNHOUSED GRANT
 6 PROGRAM.—

7 (1) GRANTS FOR FILLING VACANT HOUSING.—

8 During the 5-fiscal-year period beginning with the
 9 first full fiscal year after the date of enactment of
 10 this Act, the Secretary shall carry out a program
 11 under which the Secretary awards grants to eligible
 12 entities to assist the eligible entities in creating pilot
 13 programs that use creative solutions to convert va-
 14 cant housing, where safe and practicable, into long-
 15 term, stable housing for use by unhoused individuals
 16 who seek to utilize the existing housing stock.

17 (2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under para-
 18 graph (1), the Secretary shall prioritize—

19 (A) applicants located in jurisdictions with
 20 a high rate of homelessness, as determined by
 21 the Secretary using data from the most recent
 22 Annual Homeless Assessment Report;

23 (B) applicants that provide or connect resi-
 24 dents with supportive services, including job
 25 training, health care, and education;

(C) applicants that demonstrate meaningful community representation, including representation within the eligible entity, of—

(i) unhoused individuals or formerly unhoused individuals;

(ii) residents of the community in which the eligible entity operates; and

(iii) people who work at or own businesses in the community in which the eligible entity operates;

(D) applicants that operate programs with extended affordability covenants and mechanisms that support long-term affordability; and

(E) applicants—

(i) that implement equitable tenant screening practices that limit the use of eviction history and other exclusionary criteria in ways that prioritize housing access for unhoused individuals; and

(ii) whose protocols remove barriers and emphasize an individual's ability to sustain housing rather than punitive criteria.

(3) APPLICATION.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity desir-
2 ing a grant under paragraph (1) shall submit to
3 the Secretary an application at such time, in
4 such manner, and containing or accompanied
5 by such information, as the Secretary may rea-
6 sonably require.

7 (B) CONTENTS.—An application submitted
8 under subparagraph (A) shall include an assur-
9 ance that the eligible entity will use the grant
10 to convert housing for the purpose of providing
11 long-term, stable housing to unhoused individ-
12 uals.

13 (4) ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible en-
14 tity that receives a grant under paragraph (1) may
15 use the grant funds to establish long-term, stable
16 housing for use by unhoused individuals by—

17 (A) converting vacant residential property
18 in the possession of the eligible entity;

19 (B) covering costs associated with up-
20 grades to increase the habitability of vacant
21 housing; or

22 (C) covering costs associated with long-
23 term maintenance and upkeep of housing that
24 has been converted under subparagraph (A).

1 (5) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Secretary shall
2 submit an annual report to Congress regarding the
3 use of funds under this section and the success of
4 the grant program carried out under this section.

5 (6) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
6 There is authorized to be appropriated such sums as
7 may be necessary to carry out this section.

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