MODEL STATE ACT

The [State] Housing Stability and DOOR Act

Model legislation for adoption by any State legislature — companion to the Federal DOOR to Housing Act of 2026

Drafting note for sponsors: This model act is drafted in neutral style for adaptation to any State's bill format and code structure. Bracketed terms are for the drafter. Section 10 presents a funding menu because State revenue structures differ. The act is designed to operate on its own and to interlock with the Federal DOOR to Housing Act if enacted — State programs established here are structured to qualify for Federal funds under that Act, and the outcome measures in Section 9 mirror the Federal measures so that a State may enter pay-for-results partnerships without redesign.

Section 1. Short title.

This act may be cited as the "[State] Housing Stability and DOOR Act."

Section 2. Legislative findings and intent.

The Legislature finds that:

(1) Homelessness in [State] is driven principally by the interaction of housing costs and household crises — eviction, job loss, medical emergency, domestic violence, and discharge from public institutions — and is therefore preventable in a large share of cases by timely, targeted, temporary assistance. [Drafter: insert the State's current point-in-time count, cost-burden data, and eviction filing volume here; national figures and sources appear in the companion evidence memorandum.]

(2) Preventing the loss of housing is more humane and less expensive than responding to homelessness after it occurs. Rigorous national research found that households at imminent risk receiving one-time emergency assistance were 76 percent less likely to enter shelter within six months, and a person experiencing chronic homelessness generates public costs on the order of $35,000 per year in emergency, custodial, and crisis systems, costs borne largely by State and local government.

(3) No agency of this State should discharge a person from its custody or care into homelessness.

(4) It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a homelessness prevention framework that addresses root causes; that is fast, flexible, and accountable; that mandates no single service model and preserves both immediate-access and recovery-oriented options; that treats housing providers as partners; and that measures and publishes its results so that funding follows what works.

Section 3. Definitions.

In this act, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

(1) "At-risk household" means a household that has received a notice of eviction or termination of tenancy; is experiencing or fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking; is within 90 days of discharge from a covered institution without an identified housing arrangement; is severely rent-burdened and facing a documented economic shock; or is otherwise likely to lose safe and stable housing within 90 days.

(2) "Covered institution" means a correctional facility, jail, hospital, psychiatric facility, residential treatment program, or foster care placement operated, funded, or licensed in whole or in part by the State or a political subdivision.

(3) "Housing stability services" means services and assistance intended to help a household obtain, retain, or return to permanent housing, including housing navigation and problem-solving, landlord-tenant mediation, legal information and assistance, case management, document recovery, benefits enrollment, employment support, credit counseling, and coordination with health, behavioral health, and recovery supports.

(4) "Lead agency" means [the State housing agency / the agency designated by the Governor] to administer this act.

(5) "Stabilization housing" means housing, without regard to service model, affordable to the occupying household and paired with access to services sufficient to enable a person experiencing chronic homelessness or high utilization of public crisis systems to attain durable stability and the maximum achievable independence.

(6) "Recovery residence" means a shared living environment free from alcohol and illicit drug use, centered on peer support and connection to recovery services, certified under [State certification] or nationally recognized standards.

Section 4. Housing stability program.

(1) The lead agency shall administer a housing stability program providing flexible assistance to at-risk households to prevent housing loss and to return households experiencing homelessness rapidly to housing.

(2) Assistance may include rental arrears; short- and medium-term rental assistance not exceeding 24 months per household; security deposits; utility assistance; one-time emergency stabilization payments for documented shocks; moving, storage, application, and screening costs; document recovery; housing problem-solving and diversion assistance; and housing stability services.

(3) No household may be required to enter shelter or to become homeless as a condition of assistance. A family should not have to lose its home to qualify for help keeping it.

(4) The lead agency shall establish a 72-hour determination standard for households facing imminent housing loss and a single published point of entry for requests for help.

(5) Where the crisis is nonpayment of rent or utilities, payment shall be made directly to the housing provider or utility wherever practicable, and shall issue within 30 days of approval.

(6) The lead agency shall target assistance using documented, validated risk factors, with priority to households at or below 50 percent of area median income and households facing imminent loss. No household may be denied solely on the basis of an automated predictive score.

Section 5. Eviction prevention and court diversion.

(1) The lead agency, in cooperation with the [Judicial Council / Administrative Office of the Courts], shall support eviction diversion, including pre-filing resolution and mediation; emergency assistance at or before filing; legal information, advice, and representation for income-eligible tenants; legal assistance for small landlords; and court navigation services.

(2) Courts, landlords, tenant advocates, and providers may enter into diversion agreements where lawful and appropriate. Participation by any court is voluntary.

(3) Nothing in this act limits any right, remedy, or defense otherwise available under the landlord-tenant law of this State, and nothing in this act modifies that law.

Section 6. No exit into homelessness.

(1) Each covered institution shall, before a scheduled release or discharge: screen each person for housing risk; complete a documented housing plan for each person screened as at risk; assist the person to obtain identification documents and to apply for benefits for which the person is eligible; and make a warm handoff to a receiving provider.

(2) Beginning [18 months after the effective date], each covered institution shall report annually to the lead agency its discharge-to-homelessness rate, and the lead agency shall publish such rates.

(3) The lead agency shall provide grants for in-reach housing navigation in jails, prisons, hospitals, and behavioral health facilities; for transition housing assistance for youth exiting foster care through age 26; and for reentry housing navigation, including recovery residence placement where chosen by the individual.

Section 7. Stabilization housing and recovery supports.

(1) The lead agency shall support the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, master-leasing, and operation of stabilization housing for persons experiencing chronic homelessness and high utilizers of public crisis systems, with enforceable long-term affordability and compliance with fair housing law.

(2) Model plurality. Neither the lead agency nor any grantee may be required to adopt, nor be penalized for adopting, a particular service philosophy, whether immediate-access or recovery-oriented; funding shall follow measured outcomes.

(3) No dead ends. Each participating community shall maintain a plan under which a person declining a particular program is not left without access to any assistance; both immediate-access and recovery-oriented options are identified or planned; and no funded program discharges a person to the street as a disciplinary measure without a documented alternative offer.

(4) Certified recovery residences are eligible providers under this act for persons who choose them.

Section 8. Housing provider partnership.

(1) Participation by housing providers is voluntary. The lead agency may operate a mitigation reserve reimbursing participating providers for documented damages or unpaid rent exceeding a security deposit, as an inducement to rent to households the market would otherwise screen out.

(2) Acceptance of payment under this act cures the nonpayment to which it is applied and does not otherwise abridge a provider's lawful rights.

Section 9. Outcomes, data, reporting, and privacy.

(1) The lead agency shall adopt the following outcome measures, aligned with the Federal DOOR to Housing Act: housing retention at 12 and 24 months; returns to homelessness within 24 months; time from request to assistance; exits to permanent housing; discharge-to-homelessness rates; employment and income at exit (reported as information, never as a condition of housing assistance); crisis-system utilization where data partnerships permit; and functional zero certification status.

(2) The lead agency shall publish grantee performance annually in machine-readable form, and shall report annually to the Legislature, including cost per outcome and improper payment estimates.

(3) Data collected under this act shall be used only to administer and evaluate assistance; shall comply with applicable privacy law; may not be sold; and may not be used to deny assistance to an otherwise eligible household solely on the basis of predictive risk scoring.

(4) The State may enter into pay-for-results agreements, including under the Federal Social Impact Partnerships to Pay for Results Act, under which the State repays investors or reinvests savings from independently verified reductions in homelessness and crisis-system utilization. Verified savings retained by the State shall be reinvested in activities under this act.

Section 10. Funding.

[Drafter's menu — select and adapt:]

(1) There is appropriated to the lead agency $[___] for the biennium beginning [date], allocated: [__]% to Section 4; [__]% to Sections 5; [__]% to Section 6; [__]% to Section 7; up to 6% for administration; and 1% for independent evaluation.

(2) [Housing trust fund dedication: recording fees, real estate transfer tax increment, or documentary stamp surcharge.]

(3) [General obligation or revenue bond authority for stabilization housing capital, subject to (voter approval / legislative authorization).]

(4) The lead agency shall pursue and may accept Federal funds, including under the Federal DOOR to Housing Act, and philanthropic funds, and may braid funding sources to the extent permitted by law. State funds under this act supplement and do not supplant existing appropriations.

Section 11. Program integrity.

The lead agency shall establish documentation standards proportionate to assistance type; require independent audits above a threshold; report improper payments annually; and refer suspected fraud to [the State Auditor / Attorney General].

Section 12. Rules of construction.

Nothing in this act creates an entitlement to assistance or a private right of action; preempts local land use authority; requires any locality to participate; limits the lawful authority of any locality with respect to public property or public order; or authorizes any official to compel any person to accept housing, services, or treatment except as otherwise provided by law independent of this act.

Section 13. Rulemaking and implementation.

The lead agency may adopt rules to implement this act and shall issue initial guidance within 90 days and begin accepting applications within 180 days of the effective date, consulting in that process with persons with lived experience of homelessness and with local government, provider, court, landlord, and tenant stakeholders.

Section 14. Severability; effective date.

If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, the remainder is not affected. This act takes effect [on the first day of the fiscal year following enactment], and the lead agency may act before that date as necessary for timely implementation.