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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- HOMELESSNESS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Introduced By: Senators Paolino, Thompson, Patalano, Acosta, Murray, McKenney,
Kallman, Bell, Raptakis, and Gu

Date Introduced: February 13, 2026

Referred To: Senate Labor & Gaming

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings.

2 The General Assembly finds and declares:

3 (1) Homelessness remains a significant challenge affecting individuals and families
4 throughout the State of Rhode Island, creating barriers to stable employment, housing, and self-
5 sufficiency;

6 (2) Individuals experiencing homelessness are frequently excluded from the workforce due
7 to lack of permanent address, transportation, access to identification documents, or recent work
8 history;

9 (3) Gainful employment, even on a short-term or transitional basis, can improve self-
10 esteem, provide income, build work history, and serve as a pathway toward long-term housing
11 stability;

12 (4) Day-labor and transitional employment programs implemented in other jurisdictions
13 have demonstrated success in providing immediate, low-barrier employment opportunities for
14 individuals experiencing homelessness while simultaneously improving public spaces;

15 (5) Beautification, sanitation, and cleanup projects benefit the public health, safety, and
16 quality of life of Rhode Island communities; and

17 (6) It is in the public interest to establish a pilot program that pairs paid employment for
18 individuals experiencing homelessness with community beautification and cleanup efforts, while
19 connecting participants to supportive services.

1 SECTION 2. Title 40 of the General Laws entitled "HUMAN SERVICES" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 23

4 HOMELESSNESS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

5 **40-23-1. Establishment of program.**

6 (a) There is hereby established within the executive office of housing, established pursuant
7 to § 42-167-1, in consultation with the department of behavioral healthcare, developmental
8 disabilities and hospitals and other state agencies and departments, a homelessness beautification
9 and employment program ("the program").

10 (b) The program shall provide paid, temporary employment opportunities to individuals
11 experiencing homelessness to perform community beautification, sanitation, and cleanup projects
12 including, but not limited to:

13 (1) Litter and debris removal;

14 (2) Park, shoreline, and public space cleanup;

15 (3) Graffiti removal;

16 (4) Landscaping and beautification projects; and

17 (5) Other similar projects that improve public property or nonprofit facilities.

18 **40-23-2. Eligibility and participation.**

19 (a) Participation in the program shall be voluntary and open to individuals who:

20 (1) Are experiencing homelessness or housing instability, as defined by the executive office
21 of housing; and

22 (2) Are authorized to work in the United States.

23 (b) The program shall be designed as a low-barrier employment opportunity and shall not
24 require:

25 (1) A permanent address;

26 (2) Prior work experience; or

27 (3) Participation in law enforcement or encampment enforcement actions.

28 **40-23-3. Wages, conditions, and worker protections.**

29 (a) Participants shall be paid an hourly wage not less than the Rhode Island minimum wage.

30 (b) Participants shall be covered by applicable worker protections, including:

31 (1) Workers' compensation coverage;

32 (2) Workplace safety training; and

33 (3) Appropriate personal protective equipment.

34 (c) Employment under the program shall be temporary in nature and shall not create a

1 [property right or expectation of continued employment.](#)

2 **40-23-4. Supportive services and workforce development.**

3 [The executive office of housing may coordinate with state agencies, municipalities,](#)
4 [nonprofit organizations, and workforce development entities to provide participants with access to:](#)

5 [\(1\) Job readiness training;](#)

6 [\(2\) Assistance obtaining identification documents;](#)

7 [\(3\) Referrals to housing navigation services;](#)

8 [\(4\) Behavioral health and substance use treatment referrals; and](#)

9 [\(5\) Connections to longer-term employment opportunities.](#)

10 **40-23-5. Municipal and nonprofit partnerships.**

11 [\(a\) The executive office of housing may enter into agreements with:](#)

12 [\(1\) Municipalities;](#)

13 [\(2\) State agencies;](#)

14 [\(3\) Nonprofit organizations; and](#)

15 [\(4\) Other eligible entities to identify projects, supervise work crews, and administer day-](#)
16 [to-day operations of the program.](#)

17 [\(b\) Priority shall be given to projects that:](#)

18 [\(1\) Improve public health and safety;](#)

19 [\(2\) Enhance community appearance; and](#)

20 [\(3\) Provide visible public benefit.](#)

21 **40-23-6. Duration and reporting.**

22 [\(a\) The program shall initially operate as a three \(3\) year pilot program commencing July](#)
23 [1, 2026, subject to the appropriation of funds.](#)

24 [\(b\) No later than December 31 of each year, the executive office of housing shall submit a](#)
25 [report to the governor, the speaker of the house, and the president of the senate that includes:](#)

26 [\(1\) The number of individuals served;](#)

27 [\(2\) The number of work hours provided;](#)

28 [\(3\) Total wages paid;](#)

29 [\(4\) Types and locations of projects completed;](#)

30 [\(5\) Referrals to housing and supportive services; and](#)

31 [\(6\) Recommendations regarding continuation, expansion, or modification of the program.](#)

32 **40-23-7. Funding.**

33 [\(a\) The general assembly may appropriate funds for the implementation and support of the](#)
34 [program established by the provisions of this chapter.](#)

1 **(b) In addition to any appropriation by the general assembly pursuant to subsection (a) of**
2 **this section, the executive office of housing shall apply for and accept applicable federal funds,**
3 **grants, private donations, or other funding sources to support the program.**

4 **40-23-8. Sunset.**

5 **The provisions of this chapter and the program shall sunset and expire on July 1, 2029,**
6 **unless extended by the general assembly.**

7 **40-23-9. Severability.**

8 **If any provision of this chapter or its application is held invalid, such invalidity shall not**
9 **affect other provisions or applications of the chapter which can be given effect without the invalid**
10 **provision or application.**

11 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- HOMELESSNESS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

1 This act would create a state-run pilot program in Rhode Island that provides paid, low-
2 barrier employment to individuals experiencing homelessness for community beautification and
3 cleanup projects while connecting participants to supportive services.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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