

NEW JERSEY ADVOCACY NETWORK TO END HOMELESSNESS

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CONSUMER

SCOTT FAIRMAN

County Based Homeless Trust Funds

Homeless Trust Funds are distinct accounts that receive dedicated public funds to support local efforts to prevent and end homelessness. They are typically established through ordinance or legislation creating the fund itself, the administrative structure for overseeing its operation, the regulatory requirements for expenditure, and the mechanism for dedicating identified public funding sources.

In New Jersey, state enabling legislation is required to enable counties to generate revenue for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a homeless trust fund.

Current Status of Legislation:

State enabling legislation was passed on October 27, 2008 in the NJ Assembly (Bill #A3101). The Senate version, S2354, was voted positively out of the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee on December 8, 2008. The next full Senate Session at which it is expected a vote will be taken on S2354 is February 26, 2009.

Bill Summary:

The bill permits counties to impose a surcharge of \$3.00 on each document recorded with a county, for deposit into a county homelessness trust fund. Five per cent of the funds may be used annually for administrative costs related to the administration of the fund. The remainder of the monies in the fund may be used solely for the operation of a homelessness housing grant program established in order to fund projects that supply permanent affordable housing, rental assistance vouchers, supportive services and prevention services for homeless individuals and families, including those at risk of homelessness. **Projects must be consistent with a local homelessness plan, meaning that counties must have a formal written plan to end homelessness in order to establish a fund.** Grants will be awarded by a County Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force whose responsibilities are assessing priorities for funding, reviewing applications, and preparing an annual report and annually measuring the progress of the trust fund.

Next Steps:

- The NJANEH is working to obtain additional co-sponsors for the Senate version of the bill to ensure its timely passage.
- Upon passage and signature of the Bill, NJANEH will work with counties to assist them in getting trust funds in place.
 - For counties that do not have plans to end homelessness we encourage local advocates to work with their Continuums of Care, to develop a plan
 - For counties with plans, we encourage local advocates to be active in getting the fund established and the County Homelessness Trust Fund Task Force organized.
- NJANEH will keep its membership informed and provide support as needed to ensure this effort is successful.

Counties with Plans to End Homelessness: Mercer, Passaic, Morris, Middlesex, Camden, Hudson, Bergen

Counties with Plans to End Homelessness in progress: Monmouth, Essex; Gloucester, Salem