

SS SB 4 -- MISSOURI HOUSING TRUST FUND

SPONSOR: Bean

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs by a vote of 13 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 9 to 0.

Currently, the Missouri Housing Trust Fund receives money from the user fee established in Section 59.319, RSMo, money transferred from the Missouri Housing and Development Commission, and any other amounts that are received from grants, gifts, bequests, the state or federal government, or any other source. At the conclusion of each fiscal year, the State Treasurer must allocate all moneys in the Fund to the Commission.

Under this bill, upon a request for a presidential disaster declaration filed by the Governor, money appropriated to the Fund for emergency aid must be immediately transferred to the Commission. Administrative burdens such as an allocation plan, notice of funding availability, and public hearings may be waived to expedite delivery of disaster relief assistance.

Currently, there are requirements for expenditures from the Fund relating to household income and nonprofit status of housing provider organizations. The bill exempts from these requirements emergency aid funding following a natural disaster where a request for a presidential disaster declaration has been filed by the Governor.

The bill instead provides that persons or families will be eligible to receive loans or grants from the Commission if the household combined and adjusted gross income is equal to or less than 75% of the median family income where their residential unit is located or the median family income for the state of Missouri, whichever is greater.

This bill contains an emergency clause.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that there have been devastating natural disasters across the state and particularly in one of the most distressed areas of our state. There are a lot of people in dire straits. There have been five deaths and dozens injured, as well as thousands of damaged properties. The need for financial support is tremendous. This is an example of where we need to step up and support the community and help people rebuild their homes. The bill enhances the utility of the Housing Trust Fund. It removes administrative burdens and costs and expands eligibility. This cuts red tape to get aid to people in need and raises the

threshold. Even if there was a cheaper alternative to move people out, lives are built in homes and returning safety and security through rebuilding makes people whole. It is very important for the city and the state to work as a team. This bill would allow funds to be spent in support of any area of the state subject to the request for disaster declaration. The plan is to distribute the money via grants and focus on individual households. The money can also help tenants who have lost their residence with rental assistance.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Bean; Casey Millburg, City of St. Louis Mayor's Office; Arnie C. Dienoff; Cara Spencer, City of St. Louis; Greater St. Louis, Inc.; and Kip Stetzler, Missouri Housing Development Commission.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that the requirement for a notice of funding availability is being waived. This could reduce the ability of the community to receive funds because they don't know about the program. However, the notice of funding availability has already been approved and is ready to be distributed. It will also be placed on the Missouri Housing and Development Commission website alongside other outreach.

Testifying in person on the bill was ArmorVine.