



**Substitute House Bill No. 6436**

**Special Act No. 21-26**

***AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE OPEN CHOICE VOUCHERS PILOT PROGRAM.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than June 15, 2022, the Commissioner of Housing, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education and housing, civil rights and education advocates, shall establish the Open Choice Voucher pilot program. Such pilot program shall designate twenty rental assistance program certificates under section 8-345 of the general statutes over a period of two years for use by families who (1) qualify as low income under the rental assistance program, (2) have participated for at least one year in the interdistrict public school attendance program, established under section 10-266aa of the general statutes, in the Hartford region, and (3) would like to move to the town where their child participating in the interdistrict public school attendance program attends school.

(b) The Commissioner of Housing shall develop procedures for landlord recruitment, family recruitment, housing search assistance and counseling for such pilot program. As existing rental assistance certificates become available, the commissioner shall make ten rental assistance certificates available during the school year commencing in 2022 and ten additional rental assistance certificates during the school

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year commencing in 2023 for such pilot program. All participants in the pilot program shall have access to the residence mobility counseling program established under section 8-348 of the general statutes.

(c) The Commissioner of Housing shall submit an interim report and final report concerning such pilot program, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to housing and education. The commissioner shall submit the interim report on or before August 31, 2022, and a final report on or before August 31, 2023. Each report shall include, but need not be limited to: (1) A summary of program implementation, including efforts to inform and educate families about the program, recruit landlords and provide search assistance and counseling, and (2) assessment of program utilization rates, waiting list numbers, and the racial, ethnic and household composition and income demographics of the program participants and those on the waiting list. The final report shall include an assessment of program performance during the pilot period based on available data, including, but not limited to, data concerning both the implementation of the program by the Department of Housing and the use of the program, and any recommendations the commissioner may have regarding future implementation or an extension of the pilot program.

Approved July 12, 2021