



PA 21-84—HB 6458

Aging Committee

Planning and Development Committee

AN ACT LOWERING THE AGE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR SENIOR CITIZENS AND ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO PROTECT SENIOR CITIZENS FROM FRAUD

SUMMARY: This act expands eligibility for the local option Elderly Tax Freeze Program (see BACKGROUND) by decreasing the program's minimum age requirement from 70 to 65 years. However, the act allows a municipality, by vote of its legislative body, to set the program's minimum age requirement at older than 65 years. A municipality that voted to limit program eligibility to individuals ages 70 and older before October 1, 2021, is not required to take another vote unless it seeks to lower the program's minimum age requirement.

Additionally, the act establishes a 10-member task force to study ways to protect seniors from fraud. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Aging and Human Services committees by January 1, 2022. The task force terminates on that date, or the date it submits the report, whichever is later.

Lastly, act makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage for the task force provisions and October 1, 2021, for the tax freeze program provisions, which are applicable to assessment years beginning on or after this date.

TASK FORCE

The act establishes a 10-member task force to study ways to protect seniors from fraud and requires the study to include available planning services for Medicaid applicants.

Under the act, task force members include:

1. one member with expertise in fraud perpetrated against seniors and one member with expertise in Medicaid planning for seniors, both appointed by the House speaker;
2. two members appointed by the Senate president pro tempore;
3. four members, one each appointed by the House and Senate majority and minority leaders; and
4. the social services and aging and disability services commissioners or their designees.

The act requires appointing authorities to make initial appointments within 30 days after the act's passage and fill any vacancies. Appointed members may be legislators.

Under the act, the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must

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select the task force chairpersons from among the task force members. The chairpersons must schedule the first meeting, which must be held no later than August 27, 2021.

The administrative staff of the Aging Committee must serve as the task force's administrative staff.

BACKGROUND

Elderly Tax Freeze Program

Under this program, towns may freeze the property taxes on a home whose owner-occupant or his or her spouse meets the minimum age requirement and has been a state resident for at least one year. The freeze continues for a surviving spouse who is at least age 62 when the homeowner dies. Homeowners must also meet the state's Circuit Breaker Program income limits (currently, \$45,800 for a married couple and \$37,600 for an individual). Towns may also impose asset limits for eligibility and place a lien on the property.