

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development

BILL: CS/SB 1602

INTRODUCER: Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senator Wright

SUBJECT: Housing for Veterans

DATE: February 17, 2026 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Proctor</u>	<u>Proctor</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u>Griffin</u>	<u>Nortelus</u>	<u>ATD</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1602 creates the “Homes for Veterans Property Management Incentive Pilot Program” (pilot program) within the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) for Broward, Escambia, Hillsborough, and Santa Rosa counties.

The bill directs the FHFC, in consultation with the local public housing authority and case managers assigned to veterans, to establish and oversee the Vacancy Relief Trust Fund, the Risk Mitigation Trust Fund, the applications for such trust funds, the document requirements, and all processes of the pilot program.

The pilot program provides that landlords may apply to the FHFC to receive funding from the:

- Vacancy Relief Trust Fund to hold a vacant dwelling for a veteran for up to 45 days; and
- Risk Mitigation Trust Fund to cover property loss at the dwelling unit caused by the veteran which extends beyond the amount of the deposit money up to \$2,000.

The bill requires veteran case managers to work with the FHFC to address veteran homelessness.

Funding provided from the pilot program is on a first-come, first-served basis, and the FHFC is directed to adopt rules for the pilot program.

Implementation of the pilot program is subject to annual legislative appropriations.

This bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact on private and government sectors. See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026, if CS/SB 1604 or similar legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes a law.

II. Present Situation:

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers programs that provide housing and community development assistance, and also works to ensure fair and equal housing opportunity.¹

Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program

The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program combines the HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA provides these services for participating veterans at VA medical centers, community-based outreach clinics, through VA contractors, or through other VA designated entities.²

Each year, the HUD and the VA collaboratively award HUD-VASH vouchers based on current geographic need and public housing agency (PHA) performance. Since 2017, the allocation process for awarding HUD-VASH vouchers has changed to allow PHAs to self-identify their interest in the program. The HUD publishes an annual HUD-VASH Registration of Interest Notice containing detailed instructions that PHAs must follow if they are interested in receiving a portion of the available HUD-VASH vouchers. PHAs must have the support of a partnering VA facility and meet any utilization threshold requirements to be eligible for an award. After the registration period has closed, the HUD and the VA use a formula to determine relative need, and ultimately invite eligible PHAs to apply for a specific number of HUD-VASH vouchers. The associated funding awarded for HUD-VASH vouchers is determined by the actual average per unit cost at each PHA.³

There is at least one PHA currently administering HUD-VASH in each of the 50 states, in the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam.⁴ In Florida there are 97 PHA's working with the HUD.⁵ HUD-VASH vouchers are renewed based on actual PHA leasing along with all other HCVs.⁶

¹ USA.GOV, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), <https://www.usa.gov/agencies/u-s-department-of-housing-and-urban-development#:~:text=The%20Department%20of%20Housing%20and,equal%20housing%20opportunity%20for%20all>. (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), <https://www.hud.gov/helping-americans/housing-choice-vouchers-homeless-veterans> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Local Public Housing Authority, *PHA Contact Information*, available at https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/PHA_Contact_Report_FL.pdf (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

⁶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), <https://www.hud.gov/helping-americans/housing-choice-vouchers-homeless-veterans> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

Generally, the HUD-VASH program is administered in accordance with regular HCV and project based voucher program requirements.⁷ However, the 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act⁸ allows the HUD to waive or specify alternative requirements for any provision of any statute or regulation affecting the HCV program in order to effectively deliver and administer HUD-VASH voucher assistance.

United States Department of Veterans Affairs

The VA runs programs that benefit veterans and members of their families. It offers education opportunities and rehabilitation services and provides compensation payments for disabilities or death related to military service, home loan guaranties, pensions, burials, and health care that includes the services of nursing homes, clinics, and medical centers.⁹

VA Outreach & Case Management

Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRCs) are places where veterans who are experiencing homelessness or risk of homelessness can connect to stable housing and supportive services. CRRCs are collaborative, multi-agency programs that provide access to housing, health care, and a wide variety of services that veterans may need. These community-based store front operations are located in areas of the city accessible to veterans and services are provided by both the VA and community partner staff.¹⁰

The National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV) developed this “one-stop shopping” homeless service model. Starting in 2012, the NCHAV staff and affiliated colleagues at the University of South Florida tested the program in 29 strategically located sites across the country. In 2015, the programs were successfully transitioned to the VA Homeless Programs Office operations. Today CRRCs are an important part of the VA’s community outreach efforts and a primary access point for veterans experiencing homelessness or risk.¹¹

Department of Veterans’ Affairs

The Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs was created to provide assistance to all former, present, and future members of the Armed Forces of the United States and their spouses and dependents in preparing claims for and securing compensation, hospitalization, career training, and other benefits or privileges to which they are, or may become entitled to under federal or state law or regulation by reason of their service in the Armed Forces of the United States.¹²

⁷ 24 CFR Sections 982 and 983.

⁸ Public Law 110-161.

⁹ USA.GOV, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, available at <https://www.usa.gov/agencies/u-s-department-of-veterans-affairs> (last visited Jan. 23, 2026).

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans (NCHAV), available at <https://www.va.gov/homeless/nchav/index.html> (last visited Jan. 23, 2026).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Section 292.05(1), F.S.

Veterans in Florida

Florida has the second largest population of veterans in the nation after Texas.¹³ Nearly 1.4 million veterans reside in the state, which is 12 percent of the state’s population of adults aged 18 and over.¹⁴

Section 1.01(14), F.S., defines “veteran” to mean a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under honorable conditions only or who later received an upgraded discharge under honorable conditions, notwithstanding any action by the VA on individuals discharged or released with other than honorable discharges.

Homelessness Among Veterans

According to the Florida Council on Homelessness, reducing homelessness among veterans is an ongoing policy focus for local, state, and federal agencies.¹⁵ Veterans experience homelessness at a higher rate than non-veterans, and the risk factors for veteran homelessness include substance abuse, mental health, poverty, and social isolation.¹⁶ Preliminary 2025 data indicates the count of veterans experiencing homelessness in Florida decreased significantly from 2019 to 2025, and has seen a year over year decrease of 18.65 percent from 2024 to 2025, with data indicating that approximately 1,898 veterans were experiencing homelessness in Florida in 2025.¹⁷

Programs specifically aimed at reducing the number of veterans experiencing homelessness include the HUD-VASH program vouchers and the VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families.^{18,19}

Florida Housing Finance Corporation

The FHFC is a public-private entity created by the Legislature in 1997 to assist in providing a range of affordable housing opportunities for Floridians.²⁰ The FHFC is a corporation held by the state and housed within the Department of Commerce. The FHFC is a separate budget entity and its operations are not subject to control, supervision, or direction by the Department of

¹³ Dep’t of Veterans’ Affairs, Our Veterans, available at <https://www.floridavets.org/our-veterans/> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Florida’s Council on Homelessness, *Florida’s Council on Homelessness Annual Report 2025*, available at (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

¹⁶ National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, *Risk Factors for Homelessness Among US Veterans*, available at [https://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/RB%2095%20-%20Risk%20Factors%20for%20Homelessness%20Among%20US%20Veterans%20FINAL%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/RB%2095%20-%20Risk%20Factors%20for%20Homelessness%20Among%20US%20Veterans%20FINAL%20(2).pdf) (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

¹⁷ Florida’s Council on Homelessness, *Florida’s Council on Homelessness Annual Report 2025*, available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2025-07/Florida%20Council%20on%20Homelessness%20Annual%20Report%202025.pdf> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), <https://www.hud.gov/helping-americans/housing-choice-vouchers-homeless-veterans> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.html> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

²⁰ Chapter 97-167, Laws of Fla. From 1980 through 1997, the former Florida Housing Finance Agency, placed within the former Department of Community Affairs, performed similar duties. *See* ch. 80-161, and ch. 97-167, s. 7, Laws of Fla.

Commerce.²¹

The goal of the FHFC is to increase the supply of safe, affordable housing for individuals and families with very low to moderate incomes by stimulating investment of private capital and encouraging public and private sector housing partnerships.²² As a financial institution, the FHFC administers federal and state resources to finance the development and preservation of affordable rental housing and assist homebuyers with financing and down payment assistance.²³

The FHFC administers several affordable housing programs, to include all of the following:

- State Apartment Incentive Loan Program.
- Multifamily Mortgage Revenue Bonds Program.
- Florida Affordable Housing Guarantee Program.
- Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.
- State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program.
- Predevelopment Loan Program.
- Foreclosure Counseling Program.
- Affordable Housing Catalyst Program.
- Homebuyer Loan Program.
- Downpayment Assistance Program.
- Homeownership Pool Program.²⁴

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates s. 83.684, F.S., to be cited as the “Homes for Veterans Property Management Incentive Pilot Program.”

The bill defines the following terms:

- “Corporation” to mean the Florida Housing Finance Corporation.
- “Ledger” to mean a historical, physical ledger that serves as the official records of a veteran, including a veteran’s eligibility for the HUD-VASH voucher with subsidy. The term also includes a digitized system that contains and stores the same information as the physical ledger.
- “Pilot program” to mean the Homes for Veterans Property Management Incentive Pilot Program.
- “Veteran” to have the same meaning as in s. 1.01(14), F.S.²⁵

²¹ Section 420.504(3), F.S.

²² See ss. 420.502 and 420.511, F.S.

²³ Florida Housing Finance Corporation, *Overview of Florida Housing Finance Corporation*, 1 (July 2017) available at <https://www.floridahousing.org/docs/default-source/aboutflorida/august2017/august2017/tab8.pdf> (last visited Jan. 22, 2026).

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Section 1.01(14), F.S., defines the term “veteran” to mean, in part, “a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under honorable conditions only or who later received an upgraded discharge under honorable conditions, notwithstanding any action by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs on individuals discharged or released with other than honorable discharges.”

The bill establishes the pilot program in Broward, Escambia, Hillsborough, and Santa Rosa Counties to provide landlords with incentives to address veteran homelessness, and provides that implementation of the pilot program is subject to annual legislative appropriations.

The bill directs the FHFC, in consultation with the local public housing authority and case managers assigned to veterans by the VA, to establish and oversee the Vacancy Relief Trust Fund, the Risk Mitigation Trust Fund, the applications for such trust funds, the document requirements, and all processes of the pilot program.

The bill provides that a landlord who enters into a rental agreement with an eligible veteran may apply to the FHFC to receive funding from the Vacancy Relief Trust Fund created under s. 420.56, F.S. The purpose of the Vacancy Relief Trust Fund is to allow a landlord to hold a dwelling unit for a period of time, and still be compensated for the time that the dwelling unit is vacant, until the veteran is able to move in to the dwelling unit. The Vacancy Relief Trust Fund provides proportional rent to eligible landlords for a period of up to 45 days after the date the dwelling unit becomes available or until the actual date that the veteran moves into the dwelling unit, whichever is sooner.

To apply for the Vacancy Relief Trust Fund, a landlord must submit all required documentation to the FHFC within 60 days after the veteran moves into the dwelling unit. The case manager assigned to the veteran must assist the FHFC by facilitating trust fund requests from landlords and documentation compliance. At a minimum, a landlord must submit to the FHFC all of the following:

- A completed application, as determined by the FHFC.
- The signed rental agreement between the landlord and the veteran.
- The turnover paperwork for the dwelling unit.
- A move-in checklist with current photos of the dwelling unit.
- A copy of the veteran's ledger or other proof, as received by the FHFC, that the veteran is eligible for rental assistance under the HUD - VASH program, as implemented by the VA and public housing authorities.

The bill provides that if a veteran moves out of the dwelling unit during the first 12 months of a year-to-year rental agreement or after the expiration of a rental agreement for any duration, the landlord may apply to the FHFC to receive funding from the Risk Mitigation Trust Fund created under s. 420.56, F.S. The Risk Mitigation Trust Fund is designed to cover property loss at the dwelling unit caused by the veteran which extends beyond the amount of the deposit money. The landlord may apply for up to \$2,000 beyond the deposit money.

To apply for the Risk Mitigation Trust Fund, a landlord must submit all required documentation to the FHFC within 60 days after the veteran moves into the dwelling unit. The case manager assigned to the veteran must assist the FHFC by facilitating trust fund requests from landlords and documentation compliance. At a minimum, a landlord must submit to the FHFC all of the following:

- A completed application, as determined by the FHFC.
- The signed rental agreement between the landlord and the veteran.
- The turnover paperwork for the dwelling unit.

- A move-in checklist with current photos of the dwelling unit.
- A copy of the veteran's ledger or other proof, as received by the FHFC, that the veteran is eligible for rental assistance under the HUD - VASH program, as implemented by the VA and public housing authorities.
- After the veteran vacates the dwelling unit, a copy of the move-out checklist with current photos of the dwelling unit and a copy of the written notice provided to the veteran by the landlord in accordance with s. 83.49(3)(a), F.S.

A landlord may apply for the Risk Mitigation Trust Fund only if the landlord previously applied to the Vacancy Relief Trust Fund.

The bill directs the FHFC to award funds for the pilot program on a first-come, first-served basis.

The bill directs the FHFC to adopt rules to implement the pilot program.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026, if CS/SB 1604 or similar legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes a law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Not applicable. The bill does not require counties or municipalities to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds, reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenue in the aggregate, nor reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a bill creating or expanding an exemption to the public records disclosure requirements. The bill does not create or expand an exemption. Thus, the bill does not require an extraordinary vote for enactment.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None identified.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None identified.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None identified.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill may have an indeterminate positive fiscal impact for landlords who participate in the pilot program.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill may have an indeterminate, though likely insignificant, negative fiscal impact on the FHFC for administration of the pilot program should it be implemented. However, implementation of the pilot program is subject to annual legislative appropriations.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None identified.

VII. Related Issues:

None identified.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates section 83.684 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security on January 26, 2026:

- Modifies the bill to reference the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and not the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- Directs the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to work in consultation with partners, instead of in conjunction with partners.
- Links the bill to CS/SB 1604 to provide an effective date of July 1, 2026, if CS/SB 1604 or similar legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes a law.

B. Amendments:

None.