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AB-624 Office of Emergency Services: federal grant funding; Community Relief Act. (2025-2026)

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 624

Introduced by Assembly Member Dixon

February 13, 2025

An act to add Section 8589.25 to, and add Article 4.5 (commencing with Section 8688) to Chapter 7.5 of Division 1 of Title 2 of, the Government Code, relating to emergency services, and making an appropriation therefor.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 624, as introduced, Dixon. Office of Emergency Services: federal grant funding; Community Relief Act.

Existing law, the California Emergency Services Act, establishes the Office of Emergency Services (OES) within the office of the Governor, and sets forth its powers and duties relating to addressing natural, technological, or manmade disasters and emergencies, including responsibility for activities necessary to prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of emergencies and disasters to people and property.

This bill would require the OES, to the extent permitted by federal law, to provide to local operational areas and urban areas the maximum local share of federal grant funding administered by the office from the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program. The bill would also require the OES, to the extent permitted by federal law, to provide specified legislative committees with copies of agreements entered into with local governments to spend the state share of federal grant funding administered by the office from specified federal grant programs, including the State Homeland Security Grant Program. The bill would authorize the office to retain up to 3% of the above-described federal grant funding for administrative purposes.

Existing law, the California Disaster Assistance Act, requires the Director of Emergency Services to provide financial assistance to local agencies for their personnel costs, equipment costs, and the cost of supplies and materials used during disaster response activities, incurred as a result of a state of emergency proclaimed by the Governor, subject to specified criteria. The act continuously appropriates moneys in the Disaster Assistance Fund and its subsidiary account, the Earthquake Emergency Investigations Account, without regard to fiscal year, for purposes of the act.

This bill would enact the Community Relief Act to establish a grant program to provide financial assistance to local agencies, tribal governments, community-based organizations, and individuals for specified costs related to a disaster, as prescribed. The bill would require the director to allocate from the fund, subject to specified conditions, funds to meet the cost of expenses for those

purposes. By authorizing increased expenditure of moneys from a continuously appropriated fund for a new purpose, the bill would make an appropriation.

This bill would authorize the director to adopt regulations, as determined to be necessary, to govern the administration of the program.

Vote: 2/3 Appropriation: yes Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 8589.25 is added to the Government Code, to read:

8589.25. (a) The office, to the extent permitted by federal law, shall provide to local operational areas and urban areas the maximum local share of federal grant funding administered by the office from the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program.

(b) The office, to the extent permitted by federal law, shall provide the Senate Committee on Governmental Organization and the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management with copies of agreements entered into with local governments to spend the state share of federal grant funding administered by the office from the following sources:

(1) The State Homeland Security Grant Program.

(2) The Urban Areas Security Initiative Program.

(c) The office may retain up to 3 percent of the federal grant funding described in subdivisions (a) and (b) for administrative purposes.

SEC. 2. Article 4.5 (commencing with Section 8688) is added to Chapter 7.5 of Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code, to read:

Article 4.5. Community Relief Act

8688. This article shall be known and may be cited as the Community Relief Act.

8688.1. For purposes of this article:

(a) "Community-based organization" means a public or private nonprofit organization of demonstrated effectiveness that represents a community or significant segments of a community and provides support and services to individuals in the community.

(b) "Housing assistance" means assistance available to homeowners and renters to repair disaster-related damages not covered by insurance or by other governmental financial assistance programs, including, but not limited to, costs that are reasonable and necessary to make the essential living areas of a primary residence safe, sanitary, and functional.

(c) "Individual and family grant" means housing assistance and other needs assistance provided pursuant to this article.

(d) "Other needs assistance" means assistance to offset expenses and losses in income not covered by insurance or by other financial assistance resources, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

(1) Income losses.

(2) Costs to clean, repair, or replace essential personal property items.

(3) Medical, dental, and funeral expenses resulting from the local emergency.

(4) Other potentially eligible expenses authorized by the director.

(e) "Tribal government" means an entity formed by the duly constituted governing body of a California Native American tribe in Chapter 905 of the Statutes of 2004, as described in Section 21073 of the Public Resources Code.

(f) "Unusual circumstances" means unavoidable delays that result from recurrence of a disaster, prolonged severe weather within a one-year period, or other conditions beyond the control of the applicant.

8688.2. (a) The director shall allocate funds from the Disaster Assistance Fund to meet the cost of expenses for the purposes described in subdivision (b).

(b) Moneys from the Disaster Assistance Fund may be used to provide financial assistance to local agencies, tribal governments, community-based organizations, and individuals for the following purposes:

- (1) To fund local agency, tribal government, and community-based organization costs and services used during disaster response activities, including for rebuilding infrastructure and other systems, and disaster mitigation, incurred as a result of a state of emergency proclaimed by the Governor under the California Emergency Services Act (Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 8550)), excluding the normal hourly wage costs of employees engaged in emergency work activities.
- (2) To reimburse local agencies, tribal governments, or community-based organizations that provide individual and family grants.
- (3) To provide direct individual and family grants, including housing assistance and other needs assistance, to individuals.
- (4) To fund administrative costs and any other assistance deemed necessary by the director.
- (5) To fund necessary and required site preparation costs for evacuation and local assistance centers as deemed necessary by the director.

8688.3. (a) When certified by the director, claims of community-based organizations, local agencies, or tribal governments shall be presented to the Controller for payment out of funds made available for that purpose.

(b) The director shall adopt regulations, as determined to be necessary, to govern the administration of the program authorized by this article in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3). These regulations shall include specific eligibility requirements, a procedure for local agencies, tribal governments, and community-based organizations to request the implementation of this article, and a method for evaluating these requests by the Office of Emergency Services.

8688.4. An allocation may be made to a local agency, tribal government, community-based organization, or an individual, if, within 10 days after the actual occurrence of a disaster, the local agency or tribal government has proclaimed a local emergency and that proclamation is acceptable to the director, or upon the order of the Governor when a state of emergency proclamation has been issued under the California Emergency Services Act (Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 8550)).

8688.5. A local agency, tribal government, community-based organization, or an individual may make an application to the director for state financial assistance pursuant to this article within 60 days after the date of the proclamation of a local emergency. The director may extend the time for this filing only under unusual circumstances.

8688.6. The director shall develop procedures for a local agency, tribal government, or community-based organization to receive an advance of funds to expedite the delivery of individual and family grants following a disaster.