

Senate Bill 510

By: Senators Harp of the 16th, Smith of the 52nd, Williams of the 19th, Kemp of the 46th,  
Clay of the 37th and others

**AS PASSED SENATE**

**A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT**

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 8 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,  
2 relating to general provisions concerning the Department of Community Affairs, so as to  
3 require the Department of Community Affairs to investigate and refer for prosecution cases  
4 of Section 8 housing fraud and abuse; to provide for administrative and civil remedies; to  
5 provide for certain investigative powers; to provide for pretrial diversion under certain  
6 circumstances for persons accused of Section 8 fraud or abuse; to provide for related matters;  
7 to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

8 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:**

9 **SECTION 1.**

10 Article 1 of Chapter 8 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
11 general provisions concerning the Department of Community Affairs, is amended by adding  
12 a new Code Section 50-8-3.1 to read as follows:

13 "50-8-3.1.

14 (a) The department shall have the power and duty to investigate fraud and abuse in the  
15 federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program administered by the department  
16 pursuant to 42 U.S.C. Section 1437, et seq., as amended.

17 (b) When cases of criminal fraud or abuse are discovered or detected, the department shall  
18 refer such cases where warranted to the district attorney of the county in which the fraud  
19 or abuse occurred for prosecution. Such cases shall be prosecuted as violations of Code  
20 Section 16-8-3, relating to theft by deception; Code Section 16-10-20, relating to making  
21 false statements or writings; Code Section 16-10-71, relating to false swearing; or any other  
22 such criminal provision as the district attorney may deem appropriate under the facts and  
23 circumstances of the case.

24 (c) When a case of fraud or abuse is discovered or detected that is not criminal in nature  
25 or when a prosecutor declines to prosecute a case referred by the department under this  
26 Code section, the department shall have the authority to settle such case on such terms and

1 conditions as the department finds suitable under the facts and circumstances of the case.  
2 In addition, the department shall be authorized to initiate and prosecute civil actions to  
3 recoup overpayments or improper payments. The department shall also have the authority  
4 to settle such civil cases on such terms and conditions as the department finds suitable  
5 under the facts and circumstances of the cases.

6 (d) In order to investigate for fraud and abuse in the federal Section 8 Housing Choice  
7 Voucher Program administered by the department, the department through its authorized  
8 agents shall have the power, authority, and duty to:

9 (1) Visit and inspect residences of persons participating in the federal Section 8 Housing  
10 Choice Voucher Program administered by the department;

11 (2) Compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of evidence on behalf of the  
12 department via a subpoena issued by the commissioner, when there is reason to believe  
13 any violations of laws or the rules and regulations concerning the federal Section 8  
14 Housing Choice Voucher Program administered by the department have occurred; and

15 (3) Perform such other investigations and review such documents and records as may be  
16 required to discover any such fraud or abuse in such program.

17 (e)(1) Prior to the filing of an accusation or the return of an indictment alleging fraud or  
18 abuse in the federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program administered by the  
19 department, a prosecuting attorney may defer further prosecution of such accusation or  
20 indictment and shall have the authority to enter into a consent agreement with the  
21 individual in which such individual admits to any overpayment, consents to  
22 disqualification for such period of time as is or may hereafter be provided by law or by  
23 the rules and regulations of the department, and agrees to repay, as restitution, such  
24 overpayment. Such agreement may provide for a lump sum repayment, installment  
25 payments, formula reduction of benefits, or any combination thereof. Such agreement  
26 shall toll the running of the statute of limitations for such offense for the period of the  
27 agreement. A consent agreement entered into in accordance with this subsection shall not  
28 constitute a criminal charge.

29 (2) Any such agreement shall be filed in the criminal docket of the court having  
30 jurisdiction over the violation without the necessity of the state filing an accusation or an  
31 indictment being returned by a grand jury. The clerk shall enter upon the docket  
32 'CONSENT AGREEMENT NOT A CRIMINAL CHARGE.'

33 (3) Upon successful completion of the terms and conditions of the consent agreement,  
34 criminal prosecution of the individual for such offense shall be barred; provided,  
35 however, that nothing in this paragraph shall prohibit the state from introducing evidence  
36 of such offense as a similar transaction in any subsequent prosecution or for the purpose

1 of impeachment. The successful completion of the terms and conditions of the agreement  
2 shall not be considered a criminal conviction.  
3 (4) If the individual fails to comply with the terms of such consent agreement, the state  
4 may proceed with a criminal prosecution."

5 **SECTION 2.**

6 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law  
7 without such approval.

8 **SECTION 3.**

9 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.