



Legislation Text

File #: 0284-2021, **Version:** 1

BACKGROUND: The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, established the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program on December 27, 2020. The Act authorized The U.S. Treasury to make payments to states and eligible units of local government, including the City of Columbus, to assist households that are unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Where expenditures require City Council approval in accordance with Columbus City Code, city departments will advance said legislation for consideration by City Council.

The ERA program will provide assistance to eligible households through existing or newly created rental assistance programs. Not less than 90 percent of awarded funds must be used for direct financial assistance, including rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy costs arrears, and other expenses related to housing. Remaining funds are available for housing stability services, including case management and other services intended to keep households stably housed, and administrative costs. Funds generally expire on December 31, 2021.

The Department of Finance and Management will be responsible for monitoring the distribution and appropriate expenditure of ERA funds based on guidance provided by the United States Department of Treasury. The Department of Finance and Management is requesting these funds be appropriated to two sub-funds. The first subfund will receive the entire awarded amount. The second subfund will be established for any interest earnings.

Emergency Designation: Emergency consideration is requested so that funds made available to the city can begin to be used as quickly as possible. A process will be instituted to allow the Department of Finance and Management and the City Auditor to transfer appropriations to City agencies.

Fiscal Impact: The city received \$26,822,803.20 in funding from the U.S. Treasury. Acceptance and appropriation of these funds is now necessary. Funds will not be appropriated within individual department budgets, however, will require transfers to departments as needed.

To authorize the acceptance and appropriation of \$26,822,803.20 in funding from the U.S. Treasury as a result of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021; to establish the Emergency Rental Assistance Fund; to authorize transfers of cash and appropriation within the fund as needed; and to declare an emergency (\$26,822,803.20).

WHEREAS, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 was signed into law on December 27th, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Treasury made payment of \$26,822,803.20 to the City of Columbus to assist households that are unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Department of Finance and Management in that it is immediately necessary to accept and appropriate funds from the U.S. Treasury at the earliest possible time, thereby preserving the public health, peace, property, safety, and welfare;

now, therefore

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That the City Auditor is hereby authorized and directed to establish Fund 2208 as the Emergency Rental Assistance Fund.

SECTION 2. That the City Auditor is hereby authorized to create two subfunds within the Emergency Rental Assistance Fund as follows, as well as any additional future subfunds as may be needed:

220801 Emergency Rental Assistance
220802 Earned Interest

SECTION 3. That \$26,822,803.20 in funds are hereby accepted by the City of Columbus from the U.S. Treasury as a result of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and an appropriation of the same is authorized according to the account codes in the attachment of this ordinance.

SECTION 4. That any interest earnings in the fund may be transferred, appropriated, and expended for the purposes of this fund as allowed by the grantor. All investment earnings are hereby deemed appropriated for the purposes of complying with all federal requirements pertaining to investment earnings.

SECTION 5. That the City Auditor is hereby authorized to transfer cash and appropriation between and among subfunds, departments, divisions, and object classes within the Emergency Rental Assistance Fund as necessary to allow for the posting of prior and future expenses, not to exceed the cash available in the fund as a whole.

SECTION 6. That the City Auditor is hereby authorized to process expenditure corrections within this fund, and between this fund and other city funds to accurately post financial data related to the Emergency Rental Assistance Fund.

SECTION 7. Funds are hereby deemed appropriated and expenditures and transfers authorized to carry out the purposes of this ordinance, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 8. That the City Auditor is hereby authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this ordinance.

SECTION 9. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.