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# Moscow Region Expands Housing Rights for Disadvantaged

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The Moscow regional legislature has passed amendments to laws concerning orphans that will allow them to obtain free housing regardless of their age.

The measure will affect more than 600 people leaving orphanages in 2013, as well as those who have already left and still haven't received housing.

During the opening of the autumn session of the Moscow regional legislature last month, Governor Sergei Shoigu said that "solving a number of primary social problems" is an important part of the agenda.

One of the first acts to pass was an amendment removing the age cap on orphans' ability to receive free housing. Previously, orphans over the age of 23 were excluded from this benefit.

According to Russian law, if a citizen proves that his family income is below the state-

calculated average cost of living or his living conditions do not meet legally established minimum housing requirements, he can get in line to receive accommodation from the government.

Certain preferential groups have a right to receive housing without waiting in line, including orphans, the disabled, war veterans, those who perform hazardous work and retired military personnel. Families inhabiting houses in disrepair and those that have a member with a highly contagious disease also get preferential treatment.

But the situation for providing housing to orphans is unacceptable, according to a report by Prosecutor General Yury Chaika at the Federation Council in May. As of June 1, more than 75,000 orphans were waiting to receive apartments.

“The task of the prosecutor’s office is to provide all the necessary legal assistance to orphans,” Prosecutor General’s Office spokesman Anatoly Palamarchuk said in an interview with Prosecutor magazine. The prosecutor’s office and orphans themselves file thousands of claims for housing rights every year.

In Dagestan, two orphaned sisters have been trying to get housing from local authorities for more than seven years. After numerous complaints the authorities agreed to pay compensation for not providing a solution, but there is no money for this in the local budget. The sisters plan to send an appeal to President Vladimir Putin.

There are also programs that provide subsidies to certain groups of citizens, such as young families, newly graduated doctors and teachers. Families in which spouses are less than 35 years old have the right to address their regional government to get a subsidy equal to 35 percent to 40 percent of the cost of an apartment.

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