

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITY, ALCOHOLISM, SUBSTANCE ABUSE
AND DISABILITY SERVICES

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May 20, 2015
Start: 9:45 a.m.
Recess: 9:56 a.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E:
ANDREW COHEN
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Elizabeth S. Crowley
Ruben Wills
Corey D. Johnson
Paul A. Vallone

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Molly Krakowski
Director of Legislative Affairs
JASA - Jewish Association for Services for the Aging

Mary Ann Rothman
Executive Director
Council of New York Cooperatives and Condominiums

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[sound check, pause]

CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Good morning. It says good morning again. Good morning. I'm Council Member Andrew Cohen, Chair of the Council's Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Disability Services. The topic of today's hearing--today's hearing on Proposed Resolution 282-A and Proposed Resolution 410-A. The Proposed Resolution 282-A and Proposed Resolution 410-A call upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, Senate Bill 4748 and Assembly Bill 5565A. The first Resolution 282-A addresses the portion dealing with an increase in the income threshold for the Senior Citizens Homeowners' Exemption Program, also known as SCHE. The second Resolution 410-A addresses the portion dealing with an increase in the income threshold for the Disabled Homeowners' Exemption Program, also known as DHE.

By way of background, New York State authorizes [door closes] the City of New York to provide certain citizens and persons with disabilities property tax and rent increase

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1 exemptions that help them remain in their homes. The
2 Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption, SCRIE Program
3 was instituted to shield low-income seniors age 62
4 years and older from rising housing costs by offering
5 landlords property tax abatements in exchange for
6 freezing the rent of eligible senior tenants. The
7 Senior Citizen Homeowners' Exemption, SCHE Program is
8 a property tax exemption for those who are age 65 and
9 over, and who meet certain income requirements. The
10 Disability Rent Increase Exemption, DRIE Program,
11 exempts those that receive State or federal
12 disability related assistance from future rent
13 increases if they meet certain income requirements.
14 The Disabled Homeowners' Exemption, DHE Program
15 allows certain disabled owners of one and two and
16 three-family homes, condominiums or co-operative
17 apartments a reduction on the assessed value of their
18 home of between 5 and 50%.

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20 More particularly, the problem
21 necessitating today's resolutions is that the DHE and
22 SCHE programs' income requirements are not comparable
23 to those of DRIE and SCRIE, of the DRIE and SCRIE
24 programs. In fact, DHE and SCHE programs required
25 that the disabled or senior citizens homeowners'

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2 income not exceed \$37,339. On the other hand, SCRIE
3 requires that citizens--that senior citizens' renter
4 income not exceed \$50,000 to be eligible for the
5 program. How this disparity arose is because the
6 state authorized local governments to expand the
7 eligibility requirements of the SCRIE and DRIE
8 programs in its 2014--2015 Executive Budget, but has
9 not provided for adjustments to the income
10 requirements of the SCHE and DHE programs. These
11 proposed resolutions seek to eliminate such
12 discrepancies by urging the passage of and the
13 Governor signing Senate Bill 4748 and Assembly Bill
14 5565, legislation increasing the income thresholds
15 for SCHE and DHE programs.

16 I would like to thank the committee
17 staff, Kimberly Williams; Committee Counsel Michael
18 Benjamin; the Committee's Policy Analyst--Michael
19 Benjamin is the Committee's Policy Analyst. And
20 Crilhien Francisco, the Committee's Financial
21 Analyst. I'd like to make a point that at the
22 conclusion of the testimony today, the meeting will
23 be--stand in recess. I'd like to call the first
24 panel. That is Molly Krakowski from JASA and

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2 Marianne Rothman from the Council of New York's
3 Cooperatives.

4 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Good morning.

5 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Good morning. We
6 appreciate you taking the time to come down and
7 testify this morning.

8 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: I'd like to thank the
9 Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disability,
10 Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Disability Services
11 and Council Member Cohen for chairing today's
12 hearing. Also thank you to Council Member Rosenthal
13 and members of the City Council who are sponsoring
14 Resolution 282-A. JASA is a non-profit agency
15 serving the needs of older adults in the New York
16 area. We have a whole range of programs and
17 certainly benefits and entitlements and enrollment in
18 SCRIE, SCHE and DHE. JASA supports Resolution 282-A
19 calling on the New York State Legislature to pass,
20 and the Governor to sign S.4748 and A.5565A. This
21 legislation will allow localities to raise the income
22 eligibility limits for SCRIE, DRIE to any amount up
23 to \$51,000 beginning in July 2016. The legislation
24 also repeals the sunset provision, which is set to
25 expire July 1st, bringing the income eligibility to

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2 \$29,000. JASA believes the extension of parity and
3 income threshold eligibility for the parallel program
4 of Senior Citizens Homeowner's Exemption and the
5 Disabled Homeowners' Exemption will also serve as
6 important protection to vulnerable homeowners in New
7 York. JASA's mission is to sustain and enrich the
8 lives of older New Yorkers in the New York
9 Metropolitan area so that they can remain in the
10 community with dignity and autonomy.

11 And at a time when New York City is
12 increasingly unaffordable, older adults are
13 particularly vulnerable. JASA advocates for many
14 years--we've been advocating for many years for the
15 expansion of SCRIE and DRIE and the income limits and
16 eligibility. And we finally have this increased to
17 \$50,000, which has allowed many older adults
18 previously denied services to successfully freeze
19 their rent. There are many more seniors who are
20 eligible for SCRIE than are actually enrolled in the
21 program. There's a need to expand the outreach to
22 assist more New Yorkers in accessing the benefit and
23 the return to a \$29,000 cap would be detrimental to
24 many New Yorkers and disabled in New York City who
25 are currently enrolled in their rent freezing

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2 programs. Expanding SCRIE and DRIE will allow older
3 adults and people with disabilities to remain in the
4 community and in their homes with affordable rent.
5 New York State can and should be a model for aging in
6 place. As such, JASA strongly supports A.5565A and
7 S.4748 and the New York City Council Resolutions 282-
8 A. And I would add the other resolution, which I
9 didn't have in front of me, but we're happy--we're
10 happy to support the DRIE expansion as well, 410 on
11 record.

12 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Again, thank you. We
13 appreciate--

14 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: [interposing] Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: --you coming and
17 testifying. Good morning.

18 MARY ANN ROTHMAN: Good morning, Chairman
19 Cohen and members of the committee. My name is
20 Rothman. I'm the Executive Director of the Council
21 of New York Cooperatives and Condominiums a
22 membership organization comprised of housing co-ops
23 and condos located throughout the five boroughs of
24 New York City and beyond. More than 170,000 Hew York
25 families make their homes in our member buildings,

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2 which span the full economic spectrum from very
3 modest housing to some very upscale dwellings. Many
4 of the family--those families, of course, own their
5 cooperative condominium units. But many units are
6 also still held by renters who stayed on in their
7 apartments. So a little over a year ago, CNYC was
8 pleased to testify in support of the legislation that
9 raised the cap on SCRIE eligibility. And in our
10 testimony on the first of May last year, we
11 respectfully suggested that homeowners should have
12 parallel treatment, and here it is we hope.

13 Similarly, New York should be the best and most
14 wonderful place to live for everyone. So, yes,
15 individuals with disabilities in the city should also
16 have the income level raised for eligibility for this
17 very reasonable help in living in their homes. I
18 offer the strong support of CNYC and its members for
19 Resolutions 0282 and 0410, which calls upon the State
20 Legislature to raise the income ceilings for
21 eligibility for seniors and disabled persons to
22 quality for much needed relief from their housing
23 costs. And I thank you for this opportunity to
24 testify.

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2 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you. Thank you
3 both. You know there are--there are jut two points.
4 One, I have JASA center and--and senior citizen in my
5 Council District and I am acutely aware of the--the
6 relatively poor participation rate in SCRIE in my
7 district. And maybe we could partner and at least
8 try to get the word out. I've been trying to
9 brainstorm about trying to get greater participation.
10 And I also--I tell this story. My mother lives in a
11 co-op in Riverdale, doorman building, very nice
12 building. And one Passover I was working with the
13 Bronx Jewish Community Council delivering meals to
14 seniors, and these were seniors really in poverty.
15 And I got a package to deliver to my mother's
16 building. I think this was odd. I don't know what's
17 going on, but I went to the building and what I found
18 was a senior who was a rent-controlled tenant pre-
19 conversion who had been there for 50 years,
20 literally, I believe 50 years. And, you know, and
21 was a senior living in poverty right, you know, in--
22 in a building I think that, you know, is--is a very
23 nice building. Like I said, it's a doorman building.
24 And so, you know, you just don't know where you're
25 going to find it. And these programs have very broad

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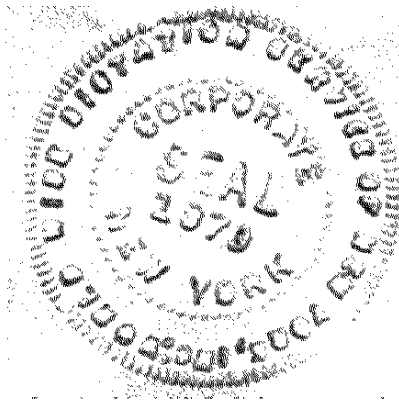
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1 applications. So again, I do really appreciate you
2 both taking the time to come down to give testimony.
3 And this committee stands in recess. Thank you.
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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date May 27, 2015