

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON AGING

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December 9, 2015
Start: 1:09 p.m.
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HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: JULISSA FERRERAS-COPELAND
Chairperson

MARGARET S. CHIN
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Ydanis A. Rodriguez
James G. Van Bramer
Vanessa L. Gibson
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Laurie A. Cumbo
Corey D. Johnson
Mark Levine
I. Daneek Miller
Helen K. Rosenthal
Steven Matteo
Maria del Carmen Arroyo
Karen Koslowitz
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Chaim M. Deutsch
Mark Treyger
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Samara Karasyk, Assistant Commissioner
External Affairs
New York City Department of Finance

Pierre Dejean, Assistant Commissioner
Property Exemptions
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Bibi Parmar, Director
Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption, SCRIE and
Disability Rent Increase Exemption, DRIE

Caryn Resnick, Deputy Commissioner
External Affairs
New York City Department for the Aging, DFTA

Edith Prentiss, Vice President
Disabled in Action, DIA
Board Member, IDNYC

Rebecca Haase, Program Director
Financial Advocacy Program
Community Services Society

Rena Resnick, Public Affairs Manager
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

Delsenia Glover, Tenant and Neighbors, New York
State Tenant and Neighbors Information Service and
New York State Tenants and Neighbors Coalition
Campaign Manager for the Alliance for Tenant Power

Donna Darby
JASA Legal Services

Matthew Chachere, Attorney
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation
Appearing for: Cardozo Bet Tzedek Legal Services
and Legal Services for the Elderly of Queens

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[sound check, pause]
[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Good afternoon and welcome to today's hearing. I am Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, and I chair the Committee on Finance. We are joined today by the Committee on Aging chaired by my colleague Council Member and Chair Margaret Chin. Today, we are holding a hearing on the Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption, and Disability Rent Increase Exemption programs commonly referred to as SCRIE and DRIE, and collectively called the New York City Rent Freeze Program. This will be an oversight hearing to provide an opportunity for the Department of Finance to provide the Council with an update on efforts to conduct outreach and increased enrollment for rent free program. In addition, we will be considering Intro 798-A sponsored by Council Member Cornegy, which the--which would require notice about potential rents, preferential rents to be included on certain Rent Freeze Programs' documents provided to tenants. I'm doing this without my glasses so bear with me. Before we begin, I would like to thank the staff of the Finance and Legislative Division for the work

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2 they did preparing for this hearing, specifically my
3 Chief Counsel Tanisha Edwards; Assistant Counsel
4 Rebecca Chasen; Unit Head Dohini Sompura; Finance
5 Analyst Brittany Morrissey; and committee count--
6 Committee Counsel Eric Bernstein. I'd like to first
7 provide a brief overview of the comprehensive report
8 that DOF issued last December detailing the number of
9 estimated eligible SCRIE and DRIE households across
10 the city, and outlining DOF's new targeted outreach
11 program to reach as much of the unenrolled population
12 as possible. The findings of the report highlighted
13 the necessity of the new outreach initiative set
14 forth by DOF, by DOF's estimate. At the time, only
15 39% of the estimated eligible SCRIE and DRIE
16 population was already enrolled in the Rent Freeze
17 Program. This means that there were potentially more
18 than 94,000 seniors and people with disabilities
19 eligible for the benefit who were not yet receiving
20 them. In the report and in testimony presented to
21 the Council at a hearing last December, DOF outlined
22 in the new outreach strategies aimed at increasing
23 the number of enrollees. These efforts included
24 focusing outreach in the city's ten neighborhoods
25 with the highest levels of under-enrollment creating

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2 new printed materials that would be available in six
3 languages partnering with other mayoral agencies and
4 private organizations, and working with ethnic media
5 to reach specific populations in the language that
6 they speak. At today's hearing being held one year
7 after DOF rolled out these new outreach strategies,
8 we will hear from DOF to provide the Council with an
9 update on where we are now in terms of enrollment.
10 We look forward to hearing testimony about which
11 types of outreach have been particularly successful,
12 and what are the planned next steps to further
13 increase enrollment. I'd also like to take a moment
14 to again thank DOF for putting out the report last
15 year. It was something that Council had been asking-
16 -asking for some time, and the result provided a
17 thorough eye opening analysis of what is being--what
18 has been happening throughout the city as a result of
19 legislation passed by the Finance Committee earlier
20 this year. DOF will now issue a similar report every
21 three years so we can continue to monitor our
22 progress and fine tune our outreach strategies as the
23 data evolves. Today, we will also consider proposed
24 Intro 79--798-A sponsored by Finance Committee member
25 Council Member Cornegy. This bill would require DOF

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2 to provide certain notification to SCRIE and DRIE
3 tenants about the preferential rents. In the context
4 of rent regulated apartments and preferential rent in
5 any amount charged by the landlord that is less than
6 the maximum legal rent that would lawfully be charged
7 for the unit. When tenants paying a preferential
8 rent apply for SCRIE or DRIE, DOF will not freeze
9 their rent at the preferential rent amount they are
10 paying each month except in two limited circumstances
11 even if that rent amount is more than one-third of
12 the monthly household income, the threshold to be
13 eligible for benefits. Instead, DOF freezes the rent
14 at the higher maximum legal rent. In many cases,
15 this causes confusion for the tenants who may
16 previously have paid attention only to the
17 preferential rent amount since that is the amount
18 they are actually paying. It is--also causes
19 additional stress for these already vulnerable
20 populations who may be unable to afford to pay the
21 higher rent amount even if it is frozen through the
22 Rent Freeze Program. This bill would provide tenants
23 with an exception--explanation. Sorry. This bill
24 would provide tenants with an explanation of the
25 various rent amounts as well as information about how

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2 to contact the state agency that administers the rent
3 regulations to obtain more information about the rent
4 history of their apartments or to file a complaint.
5 Lastly, the bill would require DOF to start tracking
6 its database. The incidents of applicants paying
7 preferential rents and both the preferential and
8 maximum legal rent amounts. Once the agency has the
9 tech--the technological capacity to do so. Thank you
10 to DOF and the Administration for working
11 collaboratively with us on this bill. I understand
12 that this legislation was drafted after many
13 discussions between DOF and Council staff, and we
14 appreciate your support on this issue. I will now
15 turn the mic over to my Co-Chair Council Member Chin,
16 and then we will hear from the sponsor of proposed
17 Intro 798-A, Council Member Cornegy. [siren]

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you, Chair
19 Ferreras-Copeland. Good afternoon. I am Council
20 Member Margaret Chin, Chair of New York City
21 Council's Aging Committee. Throughout the five
22 boroughs many seniors and people with disabilities
23 with limited income find it difficult to afford the
24 high cost of living in New York City particularly
25 when it comes to housing. They struggle to balance

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2 the strong desire to remain in their homes with the
3 need to afford food, medicine and other daily
4 necessities. For those who qualify, therefore, the
5 City's Rent-Freeze Program also known as SCRIE and
6 DRIE is a critical resource for thousands of older
7 New Yorkers, New Yorkers with disabilities and their
8 families. These programs enable participants to
9 freeze their rent at affordable levels, and help
10 alleviate the financial burden placed upon them.
11 Last year, by increasing the income threshold for
12 both programs, many more individuals and families
13 were eligible to benefit and remain in affordable
14 housing. However, despite the critical needs for our
15 most vulnerable residents to access the program,
16 SCRIE and DRIE have long been under-enrolled at
17 unacceptable levels. Last year the Department of
18 Finance released a report, which found that 57% of
19 eligible SCRIE households and 73% of eligible DRIE
20 households were not yet enrolled in the Rent Freeze
21 Program. A New York study underutilization of SCRIE
22 in the 55 designated neighborhood of the five
23 boroughs, and found that in 40 of them, more than
24 half of eligible SCRIE tenants were un-enrolled. To
25 address this critical under-enrollment, DOF announced

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2 several outreach strategies including participant--
3 partnering with DFTA and community groups to
4 distribute SCRIE and DRIE information, distributing
5 SCRIE materials in multiple languages, and publishing
6 advertisements and notices in ethnic medias to ensure
7 that all communities are engaged. Today, I look
8 forward to hearing from DOF and DFTA on the
9 effectiveness on these initiatives, and receive an
10 update on how many new individuals have been
11 enrolled. I also hope to hear how the Administration
12 plans to enroll those who have not yet done so. I
13 have also co-sponsored a bill with Council Member
14 Ferreras-Copeland that I believe would be an
15 important tool in increasing enrollment in SCRIE and
16 DRIE. Intro 621 introduced in January of this year
17 would require owners of multiple dwellings containing
18 rent regulated dwelling units to provide tenants and
19 prospective tenants of those units a notice about
20 SCRIE and DRIE along with a lease or lease renewal
21 form. I am proud to have the support of 13 of my
22 colleagues on this legislation. Additionally, today
23 we will be considering Intro 798-A, sponsored by
24 Council Member Cornegy, which will provide greater
25 information to SCRIE and DRIE applicants and

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2 beneficiaries about how their benefits are
3 calculated. I am proud to co-sponsor this important
4 bill along with Council Member Cornegy and many of my
5 colleagues. I want to thank Chairwoman Ferreras-
6 Copeland and the members of the Finance Committee for
7 holding this important hearing with us today as well
8 as to acknowledge Council Member Koslowitz, Vallone
9 and Treyger of the Aging Committee who have joined us
10 this afternoon. I would also like to thank the Aging
11 Committee staff Eric Bernstein, Committee Counsel
12 Brittany Morrissey, and Dohini Sompura from the
13 Finance Division as well as the Finance Committee
14 staff Tanisha Edwards and Rebecca Chasen. Before we
15 begin, I guess we'll turn it over to Council Member
16 Cornegy.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Good afternoon.
18 Thank you Madam Chairs. I'm Council Member Robert
19 Cornegy, Jr., and I'm extremely excited to be here
20 this--this afternoon. I chair the Committee on Small
21 Business, but as a Council--as Council Members we
22 can't confine our focus to the areas where we are
23 assigned to lead. We have to be concerned about all
24 of the issues that affect our constituents and the
25 city as a whole, and on a personal note, I would like

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2 to say before I became a council member, I was the
3 Policy Analyst on Aging. So this is something that's
4 near and dear to my heart. So just as Council Member
5 Ferreras has concerned herself with access to gifted
6 and talented and Council Member Chin has been a vocal
7 advocate for small businesses, I appreciate their
8 allowing me to raise this issues, which deeply
9 concerns senior citizens and disabled New Yorkers
10 including those in my district. Concerns about the
11 affordability of housing and rising displacement are
12 unfortunately a huge fear for many New Yorkers.
13 These issues cause enormous stress for senior
14 citizens, and for many the Rent Freeze Programs are
15 the answer. I'm grateful that these programs have
16 been improved by raising the income gap--cap and that
17 the Department of Finance has stepped up its outreach
18 efforts to ensure that eligible renters are aware of
19 this--of this safety net. The problem that we've
20 discovered by speaking with community groups working
21 to help seniors sign up is that the rent freeze
22 safety net currently has a big hole in it, and the
23 problem is preferential rents. According to a recent
24 report by New York City's Independent Budget Office,
25 tenants in nearly one-quarter of the city's rent

1 regulated apartments pay preferential rents.
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3 Basically, that means the landlord tells the tenant I
4 could charge you X amount, but instead I'm going to
5 give you a break and charge you something less. Now,
6 we don't know if that X amount is actually legal or
7 not. No one in government is checking, and the
8 tenant isn't likely to look a gift horse in the
9 mouth. And just for the record, with the climate
10 around horses, I'd like to strike that last analogy
11 from the--from the record.

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: [off mic]
13 Stricken.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: [laughs] Even
15 to notice that their lease includes two different
16 amounts. That may be the case until they apply for
17 SCRIE or DRIE. When seniors and disabled New Yorkers
18 who play--who pay preferential rent apply for their
19 Rent Freeze Programs, they don't get what they're
20 hoping for. They don't get the security that the
21 rent they're paying now will be their rent going
22 forward. SCRIE and DRIE don't preserve affordability
23 for preferential rent tenants, and right now we don't
24 even acknowledge or explain the precarious positions
25 this leaves them in. This is confusing and it needs

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2 to change. Of course, we need our partners in the
3 state to take action on these issues. I want to see
4 substantial reform on preferential rents, and at a
5 minimum to see the Department of Finance authorized
6 to freeze seniors at the preferential rent, and I
7 hope these items will be included in the City
8 Council's State Legislative Agenda. But I also want
9 to be sure that our city is doing everything we can
10 to support vulnerable New Yorkers in remaining in
11 their apartments, and communities where they've lived
12 and raised families, and where they are important
13 parts of their respective communities. That's what
14 this bill is all about today. That's what this bill
15 is all about, and today we'll hear more about the
16 intersection of the Rent Freeze Programs and the
17 preferential rents from the Department of Finance and
18 from advocates who encountered this problem in their
19 work with seniors across the city. I hope our
20 witnesses from the Administration will stay to hear
21 the testimony, which really speaks to the need for
22 this local change and change in State law on
23 preferential rent. Finally, I want to acknowledge
24 all the hard work that has gone into getting us to
25 this moment. I'd like to thank my Legislative

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2 Director who by this time tomorrow will be a married
3 woman, Dynishal Gross. [background comments] Yeah,
4 and she finds herself here working with me 24 hours
5 before her wedding. What a commitment. I love you
6 Dynishal. Counsel and Assistant Counsel to the
7 Finance Committee Tanisha Edwards and Rebecca Chasen
8 for doing the lion's share of work internally, and
9 also thank Commissioner Jacques Jiha, Alex Com--
10 Comrada--Camara, Samara Karasyk, and the other staff
11 with the Department of Finance who have engaged with
12 us about this issue over the past months. And with
13 that, I'll hand this back over to the Chairs and
14 thank you again.

15 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
16 you, Council Member Cornegy, and congratulations.
17 You're--you're great. I don't think any of us would
18 be here the day before our wedding. [laughs] I
19 know. Go home. [background comments] Okay, so
20 we're going to have a great and expeditious hearing
21 so that she can get back to her bridal duties. We've
22 been joined, and I'm sorry if I'm repeating this, but
23 just so that we can get it on the record by Council
24 Member Koslowitz, Matteo, Johnson, Vallone and
25 Treyger. We will now call up the Department of

1 Finance to testify, and the Department of Aging.

2 [pause] We've been joined by Council Member Arroyo
3 and Miller. [pause] [background noise and comments]

4 LEGAL COUNSEL: Do you affirm that your
5 testimony will be truthful to the best of your
6 knowledge, information and belief?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I do. I
8 apologize in advance to Dynishal that this is not a
9 short testimony.

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: All
11 right, wait. I'm sorry, Samara. Everybody else or
12 just one person? All right, okay, great. Excellent.
13 I just wanted to make sure we all affirm. Great.
14 You may begin.

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Good
16 afternoon, Chairs Ferreras-Copeland and Chin and
17 members of the Committee on Finance and Aging. I'm
18 Samara Karasyk, Assistant Commissioner for External
19 Affairs at the New York City Department of Finance.
20 I am joined by Pierre Dejean, Assistant Commissioner
21 for Property Exemptions; Bibi Parmar, Director of the
22 Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption, SCRIE, and
23 Disability Rent Increase Exemption, DRIE,
24 collectively known as the Rent Freeze Program; and
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2 Caryn Resnick, Deputy Commissioner for External
3 Affairs at the New York City Department for the
4 Aging, DFTA. Thank you for the opportunity to
5 testify today on the many changes we have made to the
6 Rent Freeze Program this past year, and to discuss
7 our enhanced public outreach program to increase
8 enrollment. In December 2014 for the first time we
9 came out with a report about who is eligible for
10 SCRIE and DRIE. We used extensive data analysis to
11 determine how many people qualify and where they
12 reside by neighborhood. At that time, 61,219
13 households were enrolled in SCRIE and DRIE. We found
14 that approximately 94,000 additional households might
15 be eligible for the program. We used the data in the
16 report to determine where to focus our outreach as we
17 amped up our efforts to enroll every eligible tenant
18 in the program. We began an intensive proactive
19 outreach program to engage tenants who may be
20 eligible for SCRIE and began to try new outreach
21 methods to see how to best engage this population.
22 We began these efforts by rebranding the program to
23 make it easier for potential participants to
24 understand what it is about . We renamed it the New
25 York City Rent Freeze Program. Then we launched a

1 targeted marketing campaign with a pilot in Brighton
2 Beach, Brooklyn last summer. Through close
3 collaboration with DFTA, the Mayor's Community
4 Affairs Unit, CAU, elected officials, community
5 groups and senior centers, we embarked on a campaign
6 to enroll every eligible household in the Rent Freeze
7 Program in this neighborhood. For example, our
8 report showed that one of the top ten neighborhoods
9 with under-enrollment is Coney Island, Brooklyn. To
10 start the campaign, CAU took our analysis from the
11 report one step further by mapping out where the most
12 eligible households were located in detail within
13 Coney Island. I have a map I'm going to show you
14 later. I'm waiting to see if it showed up yet. This
15 enabled us to focus our efforts even more. CAU's
16 mapping showed us that the majority of under-enrolled
17 units are located in the Brighton Beach section of
18 the area, and where these units are clustered. So,
19 instead of casting a live net over all of Coney
20 Island, we used our resources more efficiently by
21 reaching out to senior centers, religious
22 organizations, and community groups near the targeted
23 units. The Brighton Beach Business Improvement
24 District, Brighton Beach Neighborhood Association,

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2 Shorefront YMCA, the Brooklyn Public Library and
3 others advised us on the best times and places to
4 reach seniors. The Neighborhood Association,
5 Shorefront Y--Shorefront Jewish Community Center and
6 JASA Senior Center at Luna Park all serve as our main
7 referral locations so that we had a place to send
8 people when they needed in-person local assistance.
9 At least twice a week over a three-month period, we
10 handed out packets with information about the program
11 and applications in English and Russian. We
12 distributed these materials at the Brighton Beach
13 Boardwalk and elsewhere throughout the neighborhood
14 including transit hubs and local businesses near our
15 targeted households. The information we handed out
16 directed people to enrollment events with--with our
17 community partners or to community centers where a
18 knowledgeable person could help them enroll in the
19 program. We also put up posters throughout the
20 neighborhood and enlisted the support of dozens of
21 area businesses, who allowed us to post information
22 about the Rent Freeze Program in their windows. Over
23 the summer, we handed out approximately 1,500
24 information packets, and applications and held 40
25 events with 4,088 attendees in Brighton Beach.

1 [coughing] Another aspect of our new outreach
2 approach was to barcode applications that we gave out
3 at informational and enrollment events so that we
4 could capture the success of various types of events.
5 We have found that it takes at least a few months for
6 people to get these applications to us so we do not
7 yet have much data on the effectiveness of specific
8 events. However, we have analyzed the zip codes of
9 the applications we have received since June and 687
10 of the 13,300 applications we have received in the
11 last 12 months were from the zip codes in the
12 Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Gravesend and
13 Sheepshead Bay neighborhoods. This accounts for 5%
14 of all applications received compared to a 0.5%
15 average increase in applications citywide. We
16 believe this shows that our pilot outreach campaign
17 has had real impact. We are hoping to see this trend
18 continue as we receive mar--more barcoded
19 applications from these neighborhoods.
20

21 In addition, we tried out various
22 marketing approaches to advertise the programs and
23 events in Brighton Beach. We did two targeted
24 mailings to drive people to events and publicize the
25 program. We also made robo calls. We worked with

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2 local and ethnic media to advertise the program and
3 our events. We placed ads in the Bensonhurst Beam
4 and Sheepshead Bites. In addition, Commissioner Jiha
5 was interviewed by Gregory Davidson whose popular
6 Davidson Radio--Russian radio program is followed by
7 many Russian speaking households in the Brighton
8 Beach area. We had rent freeze ads in bus stations
9 throughout the city for the month of July. We worked
10 with NYC media to target locations in the top ten
11 under-enrolled neighborhoods with these ads. We are
12 using our experiences in Brighton Beach to inform how
13 we are approaching outreach in the other nine
14 neighborhoods of the top ten under-enrolled areas for
15 the Rent Freeze Program. These neighborhoods are
16 Stuyvesant Town; Turtle Bay, Kingsbridge Heights
17 Moshulu; Riverdale, Kingsbridge; Frogs Neck, Co-Op
18 City; Upper West Side; Kew Gardens, Woodhaven; Upper
19 East Side; Flushing, Whitestone; and Highbridge,
20 South Concourse. We just completed a day of action
21 in the Highbridge Grand Concourse section of the
22 Bronx. On November 17th about 50 volunteers staffed
23 from CAU and DOF staff handed out approximately 5,000
24 information packets about the Rent Freeze Program at
25 targeted bus stops and in buildings with under-

1 enrolled units. The information distributed
2 publicized and enrollment event on November 23rd, co-
3 sponsored with Bronx Works at one of their community
4 centers in the neighborhood. The packets in English
5 and Spanish were made up of general program
6 information applications. Earlier in November, we
7 met with a number of community groups and Council
8 Member Vanessa Gibson to discuss how best to approach
9 outreach in the area. Casa New Settlement, Bronx
10 Works, Senators Serrano and Rivera, as well as
11 Council Member Gibson have been very helpful and
12 supportive of our efforts.
13

14 Next, we will focus on the other eight
15 districts on our top ten neighborhoods where we
16 believe there is under-enrollment in SCRIE. It is
17 important to note that we are continuing to promote
18 the Rent Freeze Program elsewhere throughout the city
19 at the same time we are focusing our efforts on
20 particular neighborhoods in the hope of educating and
21 informing children or caretakers of potential SCRIE
22 recipients. Last summer, Con Edison (sic) included
23 an ad for the Rent Freeze Program in their June/July
24 newsletter, which goes to all households that receive
25 their services. We are also partnering with the

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2 Community Service Society, and AARP. AARP sent
3 10,000 post cards to seniors in target neighborhoods
4 to promote the program and events we have been
5 hosting with CSS this month. In addition, the
6 Mayor's Office of Public Engagement includes rent
7 freeze outreach in their campaign to educate everyone
8 in rent regulated units about the zero increase on
9 rent for this year. They're working closely with
10 DFTA and DOF to ensure that they can refer seniors to
11 centers if they need further assistance. We have
12 provided public engagement with SCRIE applications in
13 numerous languages and trained their team about the
14 program. We work with the Mayor's Office of
15 Immigrant Affairs, DFTA, the Mayor's Office of
16 Veterans Affairs, the Mayor's Office for People with
17 Disabilities and IDNYC to partner on events that
18 attract seniors and people with disabilities. WE
19 also work closely with elected officials to plan and
20 participate in enrollment and informational events.
21 Overall, so far this year we have held 130 events for
22 the Rent Freeze Program with 12,288 attendees. Also,
23 as of November 30th, DFTA has participated in
24 approximately 200 outreach events in 2015, which
25 reached more than 15,300 attendees. DFTA also

1 participated in a Citywide Integrated Benefits Pilot
2 Program at 14 senior centers this year in
3 collaboration with Single Stop the New York City
4 Human Resources Administration, Live On New York and
5 other partners. Through this program, enrollment
6 counselors at the 14 senior center sites provided
7 eligibility screening and facilitated enrollment and
8 recertification for a range of benefits including
9 SCRIE. As part of outreach for the Integrated
10 Benefits Program, DFTA conducted 31 presentations
11 focusing on SCRIE and other benefits for seniors,
12 which were attended by nearly 1,300 individuals.
13 DFTA also distributed about 450 flyers to senior
14 pedestrians, and sent 48,000 mailers to the
15 communities surrounding the 14 senior center
16 integrated benefit sites in English, Spanish and
17 Chinese, which promoted the Rent Freeze Program among
18 other benefits. DFTA and DOF participate on monthly
19 conference calls to coordinate efforts around the
20 Rent Freeze Program.
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22 Since December 2014, we have received
23 13,300 initial applications, and of the applications
24 that have already had determinations, 67% qualified
25 and have been enrolled. That is an additional 6,093

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2 that have been enrolled, which accounts for about
3 6.5% of the 94,000 eligible, but not enrolled
4 households in our report. In addition to increasing
5 awareness of the new--of the Rent Freeze Program, we
6 have made numerous operational and structural changes
7 within the agency to make sure that we keep people in
8 the program. The Rent Freeze Program is under new
9 leadership. Director Parmar and Assistant Commission
10 Dejean have led their team in a top-to-bottom review
11 of all the operational processes for the program. We
12 will be making many changes in the coming months.
13 Two of our new tenants at the Department of Finance
14 are transparency and excellent customer service.
15 This translates into us being flexible and helpful
16 when people are having trouble navigating our
17 processes to get them the assistance they need. We
18 do not want to lose people who are already enrolled
19 in the program, and we want to make sure that new
20 applicants can successfully apply if they qualify.
21 We are bidding--beginning to change how SCRIE/DRIE
22 applications are processed and are providing multiple
23 channels for review of SCRIE/DRIE determinations of
24 approval or denial. We seek to make the initial
25 application process simpler for people to understand

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2 as well so that we get completed applications up
3 front instead of receiving partially completed
4 applications that are in pending status for months
5 because we have not received the necessary income or
6 residency documentation. It is important to us that
7 people who qualify for the Rent Freeze Program get us
8 what we need up front so that we can quickly grant
9 them the benefit. Currently, 42% of SCRIE applicants
10 and 76% of DRIE applicants submit incomplete
11 applications. We believe part of the reason is that
12 the income requirements set out in the law are not at
13 all simple. We are working on an income worksheet
14 that people can complete before submitting their
15 application. The worksheet would inform them upfront
16 as to whether their income qualifies them for the
17 program or not. Another improvement underway is that
18 we are working toward a more automated application
19 process. We are examining how the process can be
20 streamlined and how we can better allocate staff
21 across processing areas for all types of exemptions
22 to address high volume periods in particular areas.
23 For example, employees specializing in renewal
24 applications would learn how to process initial
25 applications so all staff could do processing of both

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2 types of applications. We are also working with DFTA
3 and other city agencies in a renewed effort to see if
4 it might be possible to get access to some data
5 streams that would preclude the need for us to ask
6 for certain types of documentation from applicants
7 such as Social Security information. On the back
8 end, we have created many new channels for review
9 when tenants receive determination from the
10 department with which they believe is incorrect. We
11 work with City Council to draft and pass legislation
12 to establish an ombudsperson for SCRIE and DRIE.
13 The ombudspersons began in their new roles last
14 August, and have already reviewed 200 cases. They
15 participate in all our policy discussions about the
16 program and inform the changes that we are making.
17 We also have our newly established Office of the
18 Taxpayer Advocate led by Diana Layden, who is
19 extremely passionate about making sure that all
20 taxpayers and tenants in the Rent Freeze Program are
21 given an independent review of their cases if they
22 did not get the help that they needed through the DOF
23 channels. Like the ombudspersons, the Office of the
24 Taxpayer Advocate works diligently to help people
25 identify systemic issues and proposes policy and

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2 legislative solutions as needed. The Rent Freeze
3 Program is made stronger through the feedback of
4 these offices. It is also critical that we receive
5 input from the advocates and community organizations
6 that represent participants, potential enrollees and
7 landlords. For a number of years now we have held
8 semi-annual meetings with legal advocates for seniors
9 and people with disabilities. These meetings have
10 been very meaningful to us in terms of understanding
11 where our processes need improvement. However, we
12 seek more frequent feedback from advocates, and want
13 to make sure we are capturing input from social
14 services organizations that assist applicants and
15 participants as well. Yesterday, we held our first
16 meeting with a group of advocates that does just
17 that. We looking forward to interacting with both of
18 these groups of advocates more frequently and
19 continuing the open and honest dialogue that has
20 begun. Along with the Mayor's Office for People with
21 Disabilities, and the Mayor's Office of Veteran's
22 Affairs, we will be meeting with advocates for people
23 with disabilities next week. Furthermore, we are
24 engaging with landlords for tenants enrolled in the
25 program more closely. We want to help them navigate

1
2 the program and resolve their issues as they arise as
3 well. Another channel for feedback on the Rent
4 Freeze Program will Commissioner Jiha's new taskforce
5 on the Rent Freeze Program. He will be hosting
6 quarterly meetings with a group of advocates that
7 represent tenants and landlords to ensure that we
8 have a meaningful dialogue about the program, can
9 work together on changes, and are able to address any
10 issues that arise. One example of an issue we're
11 addressing is related to complaints we have received
12 that our renewal process is not working as well as it
13 should. We will be making an extraordinary effort to
14 keep people in the program, and we will be relying on
15 you to help us catch people before they lose this
16 critical benefit. We are going to email each council
17 member directly every month with a list of
18 constituents in your districts who need to renew
19 their rent freeze benefits. We will also be sending
20 these lists to our advocacy and community partners.
21 We are looking forward to all that we will learn
22 through input from advocates, elected officials and
23 working together to solve problems. But sometimes we
24 are limited in the policy changes we can make because
25 much of what we do here at DOF is regulated by New

1
2 York State law. Therefore, we've advocated for a
3 number of legislative proposals to improve the Rent
4 Freeze Program, which are crucial in enabling us to
5 have more leniency in its administration, and to keep
6 qualified tenants enrolled. This year we worked with
7 the New York State Legislature on two bills that we
8 believe will improve the program for applicants and
9 participants. These bills both passed and are
10 awaiting the Governor's signature. We are hopeful
11 they will become law by the end of the year. The
12 first Bill A7914 and S5721 will allow SCRIE and DRIE
13 beneficiaries enrolled prior to July 2015 to remain
14 in the program if they do not meet the one-third
15 income to rent requirement upon renewal as long as
16 they meet all other requirements. This is because
17 until recently, we did not check the one-third income
18 to rent requirement at renewal as we did when people
19 initially applied for the program. Because some
20 participants have been enrolled in the program for
21 years, we were concerned that they risk losing the
22 benefit or having to pay a lot more in rent upon
23 renewal once we began checking for the one-third
24 income to rent requirement. This legislation
25 protects them from that risk. New applicants will

1
2 not face any spikes in their rent because we will be
3 checking the requirement each time they renew. The
4 second Bill A7247A, S5826A establishes the ability
5 for a qualifying tenant to take over a benefit when
6 the head of household dies or permanently leaves the
7 household. We refer to this as a benefit takeover.
8 Before this legislation was introduced the law did
9 not have any section to deal with benefit takeovers.
10 The bill establishes a benefit takeover process
11 including at least a six-month time period for a
12 qualified tenant to apply for the program. We are
13 working on another bill that we hope will pass the
14 New York State Legislature this coming year, A8228
15 S6214 has already been introduced in both houses.
16 This bill would allow a participant back into the
17 program at their old frozen rent if they lose the
18 benefit for one lease term because of an increase in
19 their income. In addition to seeking New York State
20 legislation, another effort to keep participants from
21 losing their benefit we have promulgated rules to
22 allow SCRIE and DRIE beneficiaries more than six
23 months to renew their benefit or initiate a benefit
24 takeover if there are extenuating circumstances such
25 as the heads of household being hospitalized. This

1
2 will give someone with extenuating circumstances an
3 additional 18 months from their lease expiration to
4 renew at their old frozen rent. We are also
5 establishing a new process for participants who miss
6 their renewal period because they have a disability
7 covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
8 If they miss their renewal because of a reason
9 covered by the ADA, we will review their case at any
10 point after the benefit expired, and we'll reinstate
11 the benefit at the old frozen rent if they can
12 provide us the documentation we need. We originally
13 proposed these rules through a public process in
14 August. We made changes to them based on feedback we
15 received from advocates both through the formal
16 rulemaking process and in more informal conversations
17 that we had. We published the final rules on Monday
18 and they will go into effect in January. We are
19 confident that these new rules will help SCRIE and
20 DRIE participants keep their benefits. Before
21 closing, I would like to comment on Introduction 798.
22 We work closely with Council Member Cornegy's office
23 to address concerns he raised about the confusion
24 many tenants have about the difference between
25 preferential and legal rent. Our collaboration is

1 reflected in this bill. Many participants do not
2 realize they have a preferential rent until they are
3 enrolled in the Rent Freeze Program. This is because
4 the program only allows for us to freeze the rent at
5 the preferential amount if it is for the lifetime of
6 the tenancy. In many cases, the tenant receives
7 preferential rent only for the term of the lease.
8 The bill seeks to clarify preferential versus legal
9 rent, and under what circumstances DOF will freeze
10 rent at the preferential amount. We support his
11 legislation. However, we are still working with the
12 Law Department and City Council to finalize the
13 language. Thank you again for the opportunity to
14 testify today. We would be happy to answer any
15 questions you may have at this time.
16

17 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you
18 for coming to testify. I just need to say that we
19 are live Tweeting. I want to thank Jasmine Chavez
20 from the Speaker's Office in doing our social media.
21 So for those that couldn't make it to this hearing we
22 are also listening through social media. You can tag
23 myself, Council Member Chin or Council Member Cornegy
24 or any other council member that you see here, like
25 Council Member Gibson, Vallone and Treyger. You can

1 ask them, and they can ask your questions to the
2 agency. So hopefully, we can make this all work.

3 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Can I
4 just show you this map now that I have it?

5 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: You can
6 show us the map, yes.

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I'm
8 going to--I'm going to pass this around.

9 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: But,
10 before you do that, so you have to tag us. I'm
11 learning also, and you has to hash tag #nyccseniors
12 or hash tag #nyccdrie.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Hash tag
14 #rentfreezenyc.

15 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: All right
16 and hash tag #rentfreezenyc and we're all in it
17 together. Okay, great.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: [off mic] And
19 that's because we are all in it together. (sic)

20 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: We're all
21 in it together. That's a good hash tag.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: It is.

23 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes.

24 [laughs]
25

1
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So I'm
3 just going to pass this around, but what I brought is
4 a map to show you how some of the targeted areas.
5 This is the Coney Island map, and there's a--there's
6 a key here that shows you. This is actually one of
7 the older ones. We added more and more information
8 to this, but one of the things I wanted to point out
9 here to you in particular is as we develop these for
10 the other neighborhoods, we definitely would love
11 your help in figuring out the community groups that
12 we should hit that are near the targeted units that
13 we have that are highlighted here with the bubbles--

14 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

15 [interposing] So I'm sure that--

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: --
17 religious organizations, et cetera.

18 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: I'm sure
19 Council Member Treyger has questions, but let's start
20 with the map on that end. Sergeant-at-Arms, can you
21 get Council Member Treyger the map, and then we'll
22 work.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: [off
24 mic] Put it this way.

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CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So I am going to keep--I'm actually going to save some of my questions to the second round because I want my co-chair and the sponsor of the bill to have an opportunity and other members who are interested. So I'm going to talk--ask you directly on your testimony and I know you mentioned the one-third to income rent requirement, but you didn't mention how many people were affected. Have you removed anyone because of the one intro--the one-third rent ratio?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: No, because this legis--of this legislation we will not be removing people from the one-third.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
[interposing] Okay, so you will--

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So what will happen is for future--future participants that are enrolled past July, 2015 when they hit their renewal period, we will be looking to see if they meet the one-third rent to income ratio because that will be incremental--incremental because it will be at every renewal period. We don't expect that that will have a big impact on them.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: And how many New Yorkers are we thinking this will affect?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: We don't know because it's going to be sort of rolling depending on--

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: [interposing] But right now how many are we--how many--how many are affected presently?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: None because anyone enrolled in the program prior to July 2015 will not have this trigger at renewal. That's what the legislation accomplished.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: I know that and I'm just saying this was--this legislation was in response to an issue that DOF was trying to mitigate, right because of the one-third?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Right, but none of them are going to lose their benefit or have a change in benefit.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: I know, but when you said 'them' I'm just trying to ask--

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: [interposing] Oh, what was the population--

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CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

3

[interposing] Yes.

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ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: --that
could have been affected?

6

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes, yes.

7

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I don't
remember that number.

9

BIBI PARMA: [off mic] There were about-

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11

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Can you
just speak into the mic and say your name for the
record?

14

BIBI PARMAR: [off mic] My name is Bibi
Parmar. I'm the Director of SCRIE and DRIE programs.

16

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Yes.

17

BIBI PARMAR: So--

18

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

19

[interposing] Is your microphone on? Is her
microphone on?

21

BIBI PARMAR: Hello.

22

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Is the
red light on.

24

BIBI PARMAR: Yes.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay,
3 here we go.

4 BIBI PARMAR: Can you hear me?

5 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes.

6 BIBI PARMAR: So when we initially look
7 at our active SCRIE and DRIE populations, we found
8 about 5,000 people would see some sort of increase.
9 They wouldn't be removed from the program, but--

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:

11 [interposing] Right.

12 BIBI PARMAR: --they would see some sort
13 of increase because we would be bumping them up to
14 their one-third. And about 500 people who would be
15 removed from the program. So these participants are
16 the ones that are grandfathered in. So they wouldn't
17 be affected at all as per this bill.

18 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So, thank
19 you very much. I think that's it. You know, those
20 are a lot of people that will be affected. I just
21 want to talk about the 200 cases. Do you intend to
22 have an MMR indicator for us to be able to follow
23 this through your ombudsperson, their work? Can we
24 expect to see this in the outline?

1
2 BIBI PARMAR: Oh, we--we haven't spoken
3 about that thus far.

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay.
5 Well, I'm requesting that there be included in--

6 BIBI PARMAR: [interposing] Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: --the MMR
8 an indicator just so that we can follow the--the work
9 that you're doing on this in particular. And I have
10 one more question before I--I give it over to the co-
11 chair. In the report that DOF put out last December
12 reported that there was 61,319 SCRIE and DRIE
13 beneficiaries enrolled in the program but there was
14 an estimated 94,047 eligible beneficiaries who were
15 not enrolled in the program. After a year of DOF's
16 outreach I know that you spoke about the outreach
17 plan, and the outreach campaign, can you provide us
18 with the current number year to date on the SCRIE?

19 BIBI PARMAR: So the current number of
20 participants is approximately 60--62,000. However,
21 there have been 6,000 new people enrolled since we
22 came out with the report last December.

23 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: And in
24 Fiscal 20--

1
2 BIBI PARMAR: [interposing] New
3 households I should say.

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: New
5 households, yeah. In Fiscal 2015 MMR, DOF reported
6 that the initial applications for SCRIE increased by
7 90% between Fiscal 2015 and 20--between Fiscal 2014
8 and 15 rising fro 8,272 to 15,713. DOF attributed
9 the increase to its outreach efforts, and the
10 increase in the income threshold to 50,000. How many
11 initial applications is DOF on track to receive for
12 2016? [door slams]

13 BIBI PARMAR: In--Okay, let's see. That
14 was a good one, huh?

15 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: That was
16 a good one, yeah. Thank you for my staff's work.
17 (sic)

18 BIBI PARMAR: Excuse me. So in Fiscal
19 Year 15 so far--16 so far we have 3,634 applications
20 for SCRIE and we have 1,148 for DRIE.

21 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So would
22 you say we have a dip or, you know, what do we--

23 BIBI PARMAR: So, yes, we're looking--
24 Yes, it would be down. At the last year at the same
25 time it kind of coincided with the income increase.

1
2 So we saw a large influx of applications in--in
3 response to the income increase.

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So, is--
5 do you consider this more on our--because it seems
6 like it would be, and excuse me if I'm not reading
7 this correctly, but it's about 5,000 applications for
8 both. Is that correct?

9 BIBI PARMAR: That's correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: That's
11 about.

12 BIBI PARMAR: Well, we don't know if it's
13 revoke. We--we think--we're not sure. Some--some is
14 due to death.

15 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Right.

16 BIBI PARMAR: Some is due to people
17 moving and then some are revoked.

18 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So then
19 that would technically be a little bit lower than
20 that what you got from FY15. Well, no, I guess it--

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Right.
22 What we're talking about is initial applications. So
23 these are new--new program participants.

24 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Right.
25 Okay. Great. Well, I have additional questions but

1
2 I will ask them in a second round, and now we'll hear
3 from Co-Chair Chin.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. In your
5 testimony you talked about you started to increase
6 your use of ethnic media. So can you talk about what
7 are some of the publications that you have been
8 working with or some of the radio or TV stations?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So we've
10 been doing this neighborhood by neighborhood as we've
11 been hitting the neighborhood. We did get into the
12 Chinese press. I can't remember the--the name of the
13 newspaper. We had a few articles about us after we
14 did some events with the Lin Sing Association in
15 Chinatown, and there were--there--that was covered on
16 both Chinese TV and also in the press. I can follow
17 up with your office and tell you exactly which those
18 were because I cannot remember the name of them right
19 now. We also were on the radio program, Davidson
20 Radio that I mentioned the Russian radio station, and
21 I think those are the main ethnic ones to date.
22 Generally, what we do when we--with our new sort of
23 approach is we go meet with community to say who
24 should we be talking to? So Davidson Radio came out
25 of the Brighton Bed BID connecting us with them.

1
2 And, you know, our commissioner is always happy to go
3 and get interviewed by ethnic media. So we have
4 engaged with the Chinese press a few times. We've
5 gotten a few things with them, but between that and
6 the Russian radio, that's the bulk of it recently.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I think with the--I
8 mean our experience with the ethnic media is that a
9 lot of them it's not just neighborhood focus. For
10 example, if you do the Chinese media it's citywide
11 because everyone in different neighborhoods reads the
12 same newspaper. The same thing with the Korean-
13 American community publication. I'm sure with the
14 Russian community. It's not just by the beach, but
15 you're really reaching a larger target. So it's
16 probably helpful to do some regular, you know,
17 outreach to remind people about the Rent Freeze
18 Program. And I think media in some ways they're so
19 supportive. I mean we send them information so
20 they'll publish it, and write stories about it. And
21 so I think that's something that you really need to
22 utilize much more because they're willing to help us.
23 And I think the City Council and our Speaker. You
24 know, we have personnel that specifically help the
25 City Council to help with the ethnic media. So I

1
2 think the Administration size will really utilize
3 that resource much more than what you're doing. I
4 mean it's good that when you're focusing on a
5 neighborhood, and you're doing some outreach then, of
6 course, they'll cover it. But even on a regular
7 basis, you know, put out some stories about people
8 who have successfully applied and that you have or
9 the numbers that you have increased to this month.
10 To really just get it out there on a regular basis.
11 Because it's in the language that they understand,
12 and then they will be able to take advantage of it.
13 Also, like in terms of--have you engaged with the
14 Mayor's Office of People with Disability? How has
15 that been working in terms of to increase the--yes,
16 enrolling in the DRIE program?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: We have
18 been. So we're setting up these regular quarterly
19 meetings with the Mayor's Office of People with
20 Disabilities and Veterans Affairs. That's starting
21 this week, but we're regularly in touch with their
22 office. We help them with cases because, you know,
23 they--they get a lot of cases referred to them and
24 then they will speak with my office to resolve any
25 issues that come through. So that happens all the

1
2 time. So we help with applications and pending
3 documents. One of the challenges that we do have
4 with DRIE, though, is that unlike the SCRIE where we
5 sort of know the general neighborhoods that we need
6 to hit, with DRIE it's citywide. So we are still
7 working on how to do that. We always do DRIE outreach
8 with SCRIE outreach, but we--we are trying to engage
9 with advocates that can work more closely with this
10 population to make sure we're getting the word out
11 effectively.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Have you done any of
13 the outreach with the--I mean you talked about
14 working with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.
15 I mean the whole IDNYC Program, so are you also, you
16 know, kind of matching up the outreach with them?
17 Because there--

18
19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:
20 [interposing] Yeah, we do

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --have been some
22 successful--

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Yeah, we
24 invite them to our events. They invite us to their
25 events. We do partner together.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So are you also at all
3 the enrollment sites, the information about the DRIE
4 and SCRIE program?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: You
6 know, we talked to them to about that, and I know
7 some of them do. I'm not sure if all the enrollment
8 sites have our information. I mean some of them are
9 finance sites. The finance sites for sure do. The
10 libraries do because we have worked with the
11 libraries, but I'd have to look to see if every
12 single one does.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, or every time
14 that they go out, they should be helping you give out
15 this Rent Freeze Program information--

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:
17 [interposing] yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --because they do go
19 out to many different neighborhoods all the time, and
20 I mean it's--it's part of the administration. So it
21 would--it would be interesting for them to really
22 help you maximize the outreach effort. I'm going to
23 come back with other questions. Let's defer to other
24 colleagues. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank,
4 Co-Chair Council Member Cornegy, and we've been
5 joined by Council Member Deutsch and Levine.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So I just have a
7 couple of questions on 1798-A. I understand that the
8 Department of Finance does not currently capture any
9 information in your database that acknowledges that
10 applicants from the Rent Freeze Programs are paying
11 less than the registered rent. Is that true?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So do you have
14 any sense of how many SCRIE and DRIE applicants pay
15 preferential rent?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: No, we
17 don't. Not at this time.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So, I guess we
19 have no way of knowing whether or not--or do you have
20 any way of knowing whether or not the numbers are
21 increasing, decreasing?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:
23 Anecdotally--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: [interposing]
25 yeah.

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ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: --you know, we see maybe one in ten applications may have some sort of preferential rent, but that's anecdotal. Once we put in some sort of a flag or a check within our database, it's not really going to give us any immediate numbers. It would be gradual once people renew, and then as--as their information gets added to the system, that's when we'll have more clear data. But it's--it's going to take some time.

COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: And I noticed that in your--in your testimony--well, in your testimony it talked about the fact that you're still working consistently with the Legal Department at the City Council on the language of the bill. Is there any particular portion of the language that is not amenable? I'm sorry. That was--I'm sorry. That was for you.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I'm sorry. I misunderstood. (sic)

COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: I'm--I'm saying that--I'm saying that in--in your testimony you--you say that you are currently working with the Legal Department at the City Council on the language. Is

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2 there any portion of the language in the bill that's
3 not amenable?

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Oh,
5 well, you know, I don't think that it's like anything
6 specific. They just generally need to go through and
7 compare with all the statutes and that's the process
8 that they're going through right now. They know that
9 from where we're sitting that conceptually we think
10 this is a good bill. So it's just a matter of
11 working through that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Thank you. I
13 have a few more questions, but I'll let it--I'll come
14 back on the second round and let some of my
15 colleagues.

16 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: [off mic]
17 Council Member Treyger and [off mic]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you to
19 both chairs for holding this very I think important
20 and substantive hearing, and I appreciate the
21 Department of Finance's outreach to our very diverse
22 ethnic communities. It's very much appreciated. I
23 also encourage you to reach out to me. I am the
24 first Russian-speaking member of the Council. I
25 could help with the Russian outreach as well. But

1
2 just a quick question about people--people who are
3 eligible because this is--this is a challenge that my
4 district office also faces with regards to. If you
5 are receiving Section 8, are you eligible for SCRIE
6 or DRIE?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: No.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And this is the
9 issue because I see the numbers are saying--I was
10 watching--I was looking at the map and there are many
11 individuals who are--who are receiving Section 8 who
12 are encouraged to apply for SCRIE and DRIE and get
13 frustrated and say well, you can't have both. So are
14 you running into that when you do the outreach events
15 across the city?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: We do--
17 we do see that for sure. That is one of--that is one
18 of the reasons why people do not qualify?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So that's why
20 sometimes these numbers, you know, you're focusing--
21 when you say the people who are eligible does your
22 data include people who are receiving Section 8?
23 This is just everybody is eligible because--I'd be
24 curious to know what is the actual number of people
25

1
2 who are receiving Section 8 who could receive SCRIE
3 and DRIE but really can't have both.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I know
5 that when CAU has been looking through our data to
6 create the map that we passed around, they do put
7 that filter in, the Section 8 filter in. So that
8 we're not trying to hit places or--or mail to places
9 that has Section 8 to the--to the best of our
10 knowledge.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So is there a
12 number that you have that when you say that people
13 who are eligible is there a number where you can get--
14 --you have it filtered down to people who are not
15 receiving Section 8, what that number is then?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Let me
17 make sure that I'm right about this, but I mean
18 correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm pretty sure in our
19 report we did filter out for Section 8. So that
20 94,000 number did not include Section 8.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Because my
22 office has engaged in a number, and I appreciate. I--
23 --I--I've heard about your efforts and I appreciate it
24 and again feel free to use my office as a resource as
25 well. We've engaged in these outreach efforts, but

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Chairs that we come across many times and many people say well, I--I have Section 8. I can't have both. So, we--we--we keep running into that. The other thing I just want to flag is that I'm curious to know of the people who are not signed up, how many of them were once signed up and had a problem renewing? Because that is a major problem that we see also in my office. There are people that are seniors who have--it's a renewal form, right? And sometimes there are complications and issues with getting those forms filled out. So is this data saying that people who have never signed up or people that signed up, and lost it and for whatever reason did not--did not reapply. The people who never signed up is there a way to break that down?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: The report itself was looking at sort of that snapshot in time. So it would not have taken into account if any of these households maybe had it before because that--that wasn't how we looked at the data. We just looked at like who's currently enrolled, and who we think might be enrolled, and we don't have units -- specific data to compare that to.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Because I've
3 seen cases where sometimes landlords do not give the
4 people the information they need to verify certain
5 things on the forms. And so they could have their
6 part filled out, but am I correct in saying the
7 landlord has to fill out their part of giving certain
8 information? Is that correct?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Right,
10 we need them to fill out the Renewal Application and
11 send us the documentation.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And do you have
13 any types of--any type of data of how much non-
14 compliance we get from that end? Because if the
15 senior does their part--if the person with disability
16 or the senior does their part they're still at the
17 mercy of the landlord. Is there any data on how many
18 times we've--that they're not complying with or
19 filling out their part?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Well,
21 we--we do have a form for them to submit to us if
22 they are not able to get a lease from their landlord
23 so that they can continue with their renewal process
24 if they're--if they're in a rent regulated building.
25 And we think that helps with a lot of cases, but I

1
2 don't think we have--we don't know the reasons why
3 people don't complete their renewal applications that
4 they start.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I--I'm just
6 telling you that the reasons I'm hearing is that
7 there are complications in--in renewing the forms
8 because it's hard to get some times landlords to
9 complete their part. Sometimes senior citizens their
10 issues change. They--they might become immobile.
11 They might face more challenges with greater age.
12 That's why I think Chair Chin and Chair Vallone have
13 been very vocal in pushing for caseworkers, more
14 social workers to--to help them assist with these
15 cases because our office has become the de factor
16 social workers to help them. We have to do
17 aggressive outreach to them. So I just think that,
18 you know, I--I appreciate the efforts, but I think
19 that there's still a lot more work to do. And I also
20 want to just congratulate I think and commend my
21 colleague Council Member Cornegy I think on a great
22 bill that I think he was inspired to introduce when
23 he was working here in the Council as a Policy
24 Analyst, and now he has--will he pursue this and
25

1
2 congratulations on your bill. Than you, Chair, for
3 your time.

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
5 you, Council Member. We will now hear from Council
6 Member Vallone followed by Council Member Deutsch.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Good afternoon.
8 Thank you for the presentation. Thank you, Madam Co-
9 Chairs. Just quickly. I thank you for coming to the
10 district. That is a huge instrument with getting
11 information out, and I think our district who
12 represents one of those where you are landlocked and
13 they can't get a lot of the information. So when you
14 do that outreach and come on out, I think that's a
15 huge help. Even though they have more work to do to
16 get to those areas in Whitestone and Flushing, but
17 that's a great start. Do you happen to have--I know
18 you said it's a snapshot in time now, but any data or
19 maybe forthcoming on after the outreach how you've
20 maybe seen a spike or an increase or if it stayed the
21 same in the numbers in the districts that have
22 enrolled applications? Are those applying for SCRIE
23 and DRIE?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Yeah, I
25 mean that's something we're trying really hard to

1
2 capture. So we're bar-coding all the applications
3 that we're giving out in those areas, but one of the
4 numbers I gave in the testimony is we did look at the
5 zip codes of applications we received in sort of the
6 Brighton Beach overall area. And we--of the total
7 applications we've received about 5% were from those
8 areas, which is much higher than we've seen in a lot
9 of the other neighborhoods in the city. So we think
10 that that's a good indication--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: [interposing]
12 That's a great indication.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: --that
14 at least some of what we're doing is working.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Is there a next
16 step phase on--on what we could do together to--to
17 get that to 10% and 1Is there a next step phase on--
18 on what we could do together to--to get that to 10%
19 and 15%?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Yeah,
21 well, you're one of our--you're one of our coming
22 districts. So we should talk about how do get
23 started.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Okay. That's
25 important. I think the seniors, the mobility and the

1
2 access I think is a--is a huge point on all committee
3 hearings of getting that information. So this is--
4 falls into that. Do you see, and I just throw out
5 there like the next evolution maybe or the expansion
6 of what you would envision SCRIE or DRIE to maybe
7 become beyond what it is today?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I think
9 right now we're just trying to do the best with what
10 we've given and we're solving for problems that we're
11 seeing that make it hard for people to stay in the
12 program. Like that's, you know, something that our
13 commissioner is very passionate about is we don't
14 want people to be dropping out of the program. Once
15 they're enrolled, if they qualify for the program so
16 what do we do with our renewal process? How do we do
17 better outreach around that? How can we improve our
18 applications sort of across the board? And I think
19 once we have those processes a little bit further
20 along, we might then be able to come back to other
21 ideas. But as you can see from the legislation we're
22 thinking about for this year, it's really to solve
23 for problems that we're already seeing.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: And I think the-
25 -one of the last topics we faced in my district is

1
2 the language barrier, which I'm sure was mentioned by
3 a lot. Have we taken any steps to start to beyond
4 just plugging in a translator to actually bringing in
5 whether it's Korean, Chinese, Italian, Greek,
6 whatever the language may be, additional staff that
7 actually can work with the application in their
8 language?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: You mean
10 if they fill out the application in that language
11 itself?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: No, an actual--
13 the translation process is actually having a New York
14 City employee that speaks the language that can help
15 theme through. It's very different than actually
16 connecting to a translator. So we are hoping that
17 maybe the additional staff thing with additional
18 language requirements. That would be a big help.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Yeah, I
20 mean that's something I always look for in my
21 outreach staff, and I know we have some processing
22 staff that also speak other languages. I mean the
23 other thing that we're really focused on is trying to
24 work with advocacy groups and social services
25 organizations that have people that speak these

1
2 languages that can literally walk people through
3 applications. We were just meeting with an
4 organization before we came here to see like what
5 language abilities they have because it's not only
6 people that speak other languages, it's like we need
7 more and more people to help us sit down with people
8 and go through the applications and make sure that
9 they get the application right, and they get
10 everything in it they need to get in. And we need
11 help from community partners to do that because there
12 is only so much that we can do on our own.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Yeah, what we
14 could do is probably each of the council members
15 could get for you or before you come at our office,
16 the civil leaders, the community board heads, those
17 who are making the difference in each one of our
18 districts. And--and then you can do a--a training
19 for them there, and then they can take the forms back
20 to their meetings, and you can have your advocates on
21 a monthly basis out there. And I think that that
22 would be a great topic for each one of our civics and
23 community boards to tackle. And we can kind of bring
24 them in before--before their, you know, 2016

25

1
2 schedule. That might be something we could do to
3 help.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Sounds
5 good.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Okay. Thank you
7 very much, Chairs.

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you
9 and just as a follow up did you complete your Train
10 the Trainer video that you guys had mentioned?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Yes, we
12 did. We have our Trainer's Train the Trainer video
13 for SCRIE and a Train the Trainer video for DRIE on
14 our current application. Of course, we're going to
15 be changing applications so we'll need to redo those,
16 but they're up on the website.

17 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: You won't
18 be going there then. We are now--

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Well,
20 they're great. You should--you should look at them.

21 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Oh, okay,
22 so it's--

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:
24 [interposing] It's not like me. It's--it's much
25 better than that.

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2

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: [laughs]

3

Okay. Council Member Deutsch followed by Council

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Member Levine.

5

COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you,

6

Chair. I just want to say thank you very much. Your

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office has been really wonderful, and we get updates.

8

We get notifications of the--the residents who are

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still--who haven't signed up. Potential people that

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haven't signed up, and my office right away we divide

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the list. We make phone calls. So it's really

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important this collaboration because no such one--no

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one agency is able to do everything, and the

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collaboration I think is extremely important. And

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keeping us updated of the people that may have--that

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you might not be able to contact. So--and it gives

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excitement also in the office because we all sit

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down. We all make the phone calls and it's very

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exciting when you reach someone who either forgot to

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apply, or who has to reapply, and it's--it's really a

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collaborative--a collaborative effort between us.

22

And I do represent the largest I believe Russian

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district in the City of New York, although I speak

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more Spanish than Russian. But, Gregory Davidson is

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a good media outfit, and thank you for that. And

1
2 Elana (sp?) from the Brighton Beach BID. She's a
3 very knowledgeable person. So you're on the button
4 when it comes to reaching out to communities. So I
5 want to thank you for that, and thank you,
6 Commissioner, for all that you do. Thank you so
7 much.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Council Member Levine.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, Madam
10 Chair. There's a quirk in the SCRIE and DRIE, which
11 is that if you have already become severely rent
12 burdened before you hit 65 there's no way to roll
13 your rent back to an acceptable level, which for
14 purposes of SCRIE and DRIE is assigned as 30%, which
15 is generally how housing experts define a line
16 between affordable housing and excessive rent burden.
17 So it's--it's a line that unfortunately more than
18 half of New York City residents are on the wrong side
19 of. Over half are paying more than a third of their
20 income to rent. So this is not an isolated problem.
21 Do you have an ability to estimate just what portion
22 of people when they do enter into SCRIE or DRIE are
23 already paying more than 30% of their income towards
24 rent?

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2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Yes, we-
3 -we do have sense of that. I think we--we took a
4 look at that recently and it's--it's quite an
5 overwhelming percentage is--is paying more than 30%
6 of their income.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: So by an
8 overwhelming percentage, you mean over 50%?

9 BIBI PARMAR: That's correct, but that's
10 also based on the--the income that's reported to us.
11 There's, you know, some very low incomes that, you
12 know, we--we don't really continue to ask for--for
13 income information so we--we take income at face
14 value. So it's as complete as the--the income
15 information that we have on file for them.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I'm sorry. I
17 didn't catch that. Where's the hold on income
18 information? What--what don't you ask for?

19 BIBI PARMAR: For an applicant. If the
20 state said their income is \$12,000 year, we wouldn't
21 keep asking for more additional information.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: But there is not
23 a yearly request to re-substantiate income in other
24 words?

25 BIBI PARMAR: There is--

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COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [interposing]

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Right.

4

BIBI PARMAR: --but some--some tenants

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say that they are living off of their savings or--or

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things like that. So, we can't really quantify how

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much they actually earn.

8

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Right, but I

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think in the vast majority of cases almost by

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definition these are folks whose income--

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BIBI PARMAR: interposing] Absolutely.

12

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: --is stagnant,

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maybe even going down. It's unlikely that they're

14

going to enter into a very high paying job at this

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stage.

16

BIBI PARMAR: Correct.

17

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Which means we do

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have a serious problem on our hands. I understand

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that there--there be an act of state law to correct

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this. Do you have a sense then of how much it would

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cost with the budget impact that such a correction

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would be?

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ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: No, I

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mean I would guess it would be substantial based on

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the data that Bibi just referred to where we know

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2 that there's a large percentage of people that are
3 above that one-third, but, you know, we'd have to put
4 our heads together, and figure out what that number
5 would actually be.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Right and remind
7 me does--do the state and the city share the cost or
8 is this entirely borne by the state?

9 BIBI PARMAR: Well, the--it's the city.
10 I mean, the--I think you're thinking about when they
11 increased the--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: [interposing]
13 Right.

14 BIBI PARMAR: --income when--in 2014 the
15 state said that they would pay some of that, but
16 generally it's the city.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Understood. Does
18 the Department of Finance have a position on whether
19 you'd like to see this loophole closed?

20 BIBI PARMAR: I don't for you today. I
21 can get back to you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay. Great.
23 Thank you very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I'd like to
25 follow up that--Council Member Levine's questions

1
2 because I think advocates out there are talking about
3 rollback because of the higher percentage of
4 applications [coughing] whether they're on SCRIE or
5 DRIE are paying more than one-third of their income.
6 So I think it would be helpful if the Department of
7 Finance can provide some of the data to us so that we
8 can make an informed choice to how we begin to
9 address this serious issue so that the most
10 vulnerable in our community can get some more relief.
11 It's good that, you know, they don't have to pay the
12 rent increase, but if we can roll back, you know,
13 some of that and to make sure that they're, you know,
14 paying less than what they're paying now-- If people
15 are paying more than 50% of their income, that is
16 just not right. So I think that we--we would like
17 you to really get us the data of the people that
18 apply who are in that situation paying more than one-
19 third of their income, and how much would that cost
20 the city? A lot of times if we want to keep people
21 in their affordable home, it's going to save the city
22 money in the long run. Because we cannot build
23 housing fast--affordable housing fast enough. So we
24 want to be able to make sure that they are able to
25 remain in their homes. So I--I--I would like to

1
2 request, you know, that data from the Department of
3 Finance. Another question I have is regarding
4 Council Member Cornegy's bill. Now, in the bill it
5 requires the Department of Finance to include in the
6 SCRIE and DRIE notice the fact that residents have
7 the right to call DHCR for the rent history or if
8 they suspect--suspect that they have been overcharged
9 by the landlord. And it will include a general phone
10 number, phone line or a--or a general email that they
11 can contact. I mean that's in the bill now. But,
12 from my experience for a lot of residents especially
13 seniors, you just give them the general contact
14 information number. It's just not enough. So--and
15 also it might take a long time for the agency to get
16 back to the resident. Now, can we put some more
17 information in there not just a contact email, a
18 phone number? But also put some language in there so
19 that the residents can get step-by-step instructions
20 on how they can get their rent history or what they
21 can do if they think they've been overcharged or even
22 more educational information? So is that just a
23 number for them to call?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So I
25 mean I think that one thing that we're grappling with

1
2 in terms of that is like it's understandable what
3 you're saying. It's just that we're--we're not DHCR
4 and we want to make sure that through the message of
5 the letter, which is--that we're sending is this what
6 we're freezing your rent at. You know, here are the
7 circumstances. You should come to us if you have a
8 concern about that. We don't want that to get lost
9 in a huge conversation about DHCR that we can't
10 answer because we're not DHCR. So we felt the best
11 strategy for the Department of Finance communicating
12 with them is to give general contact information for
13 DHCR, and make sure that they also understand the
14 message that we're trying to send with the notice.
15 We--we have seen and I'm sure you guys have seen
16 this, too. The more information that we put in a
17 notice, the less people are able to take away from
18 it. So, that's why we have that general information
19 in. I mean we could talk about sort of maybe there's
20 other ways for us to communicate with people about
21 the steps we take with DHCR. I know 311 has
22 information as well. But there may be other ways
23 that we could share, the messaging that you feel that
24 we need to get out there to people. Maybe it's
25 something that we could add when we're doing some of

1
2 our outreach events. Maybe there's a flyer that we
3 could come up with for example that we could help
4 distribute to people and things like that are sort
5 of, you know, what I'm thinking of just--just in
6 terms of what we want to make sure we get out with
7 the notice. And also making sure of that. (sic)

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And, well, I think
9 also--I mean it also might be good for you to also
10 look at working with the-the state agency to see
11 what, you know, concise information they can give you
12 that could be helpful to the resident who's calling
13 for information, or if there is specific people that
14 they should be in touch with. So we want to make
15 sure that that will get the information they need.
16 The other part of your testimony you were talking
17 about I mean in the past we in the City Council we've
18 gotten constituents who have not renewed, you know.
19 So we--we get on the phone--we try to call all of
20 them and find out what happened. Now, going forward
21 you were saying in your testimony that you are going
22 to give us a list of people who have to--who's up for
23 renewal. Are we getting this information before the
24 deadline, before the renewal deadline for that?

1
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: The
3 same--the same list that we send now to the central
4 staff--

5 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: --we
7 just think that maybe it would be helpful for us to
8 send it to the Council Members' offices directly.
9 That's sort of what we're mentioning, and it's the
10 same information that I think you're referring to
11 now, which is three months after they re-send, three
12 months--they still have three months to renew, and
13 they haven't renewed yet. So we want--we want help
14 reaching out to them. Something that we haven't been
15 doing, but we want to send it to some of our partners
16 and advocacy to see if they could help us reach out
17 to people.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, okay. So it's
19 not--this is--they have already missed the deadline?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: No, no,
21 no. They still have three months.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, they still have
23 three months?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Because
25 from the time their lease expires they have six

1 months to renew legally. So if they haven't, we want
2 them to renew before their lease expires, but if they
3 don't they still have six months to get back into the
4 program.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Now, right now when
7 you send them the renewal form, do you send anything
8 in other languages besides English?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: We have
10 some sentences in other languages that say--I can't
11 remember exactly what it says. I think it's
12 something about this is an important notice about
13 your benefits.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: That's in the letter
15 itself.

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: But we
17 have--we have like an insert that we put in with the
18 notice to tell people like this is an important
19 notice. I can't remember exactly what the language
20 states, but that's we have right now.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: What about putting
22 that important information on the envelope in
23 different languages so that people know that when
24 they get that letter that it is an important letter
25 that they need to take care of it. And I think we

1
2 have done that when we were doing census because
3 people when they get the--the census questionnaire,
4 they don't throw it away.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: It's
6 just sort of like important information?

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Something about the
8 Rent Freeze Program like tell them exactly what it
9 is. You know this is the Rent Freeze Program. It's
10 important and then have that in the--the multiple
11 language that--that's required. So when people at
12 least when they get the mailing, they know it's
13 important, and they know it's a program.

14 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Okay, we
15 can look into that.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I mean that's at
17 least--that's prevented people from throwing it away
18 and then inside you also have the information. I
19 assume you also have information where they can go
20 for help--

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:
22 [interposing] Yeah.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --to get the
24 application filled out.

1
2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Not--we
3 don't have information where to have the application
4 filled out. It just--it gives people 311. It gives
5 them our website. So that's--that's really sort of
6 what--what is in with the renewal application.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But then it might be
8 helpful to also have something in there where you
9 have the partnering agencies that you're working with
10 in the different communities that can provide the
11 assistance or letting people know that they can call--
12 -even call 311 for assistance or call this agency for
13 assistance. So people know that they can go and get
14 help. It's a difficult application especially to
15 renew one, but people just, you know, especially when
16 you're targeting seniors and--they need help. So at
17 least that could bring it back into the senior
18 center--

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Right.

20 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --or a neighbor or
21 whatever to--to get help. One final question is that
22 for Commissioner Resnick So are all the senior
23 centers helping out with the outreach, and do you
24 have any data in terms of numbers of seniors that
25

1
2 actually apply in the center with these new outreach
3 programs?

4 COMMISSIONER RESNICK: So this last
5 fiscal year we do outreaches in the community with
6 our outreach team and then all of our senior centers
7 and our NORC programs have case assistance folks in
8 the centers, and so we do help not only with SCRIE
9 all benefits and entitlements and sometimes reading
10 male and other important documents. I do not have an
11 exact number as to how many SCRIE applications. I
12 just have the total number of units of case
13 assistance throughout all of our senior centers,
14 which is in the hundreds of thousands.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Can you--is it
16 possible for you to ask the--the centers and also all
17 the contractors you were relying on to help to see,
18 you know, how successful they are in terms of getting
19 more applicants for the SCRIE or DRIE program.

20 COMMISSIONER RESNICK: I think it would
21 be onerous to ask them to track every single
22 individual application that they do separately for
23 all of the different entitlement programs. We can
24 take it back and talk about it.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, ask them if they
3 could help us just, you know, even just to give us an
4 idea in terms of how helpful it is so that we can get
5 into it. (sic)

6 COMMISSIONER RESNICK: I mean what we
7 have learned through this Integrated Benefits Program
8 we did a very targeted outreach that was both on SNAP
9 and SCRIE and the low-income subsidy programs in 14
10 centers throughout the city. And what we've learned
11 is that our case managers and case assistant workers
12 in our centers are doing a very good job because by
13 and large the folks who are coming to our centers are
14 actually enrolled in programs. So I think really the
15 focus needs to be on people who are not in our
16 centers or NORCS or our case management programs.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Well, I think part of
18 it is that we also have to sort of find out what why
19 people are not applying. And then I mean I have a
20 lot of seniors in my district. They cannot apply
21 even though they could use the assistance. They're
22 not in the real rent regulated apartment.

23 COMMISSIONER RESNICK: Yeah.

24 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And then like in
25 Battery Park City in--in Gateway Plaza I have a lot

1
2 of senior population there, but their building is
3 under special agreement to follow rent regulation,
4 but they're not rent stabilized. And then we have
5 other people who have--I mean other buildings that
6 have an excellent Mitchell Lama Program, and they are
7 on a voucher--you know, a voucher program or some
8 landlord assistance program that follows the increase
9 of the Rent Guidelines Board--

10 COMMISSIONER RESNICK: [interposing]

11 Right, but not the--

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --but they're not rent
13 regulated. So we're looking to--for state
14 legislation right now to sort of expand programs so
15 that we can include a broader population, and then we
16 also have seniors who are doubling up with other
17 families and other households. And they don't have
18 an individual lease and they can't take advantage of
19 the program. But we need to work on expanding the
20 program because as much as a lot of people have not
21 applied there are still many, many more out there
22 that could use the assistance. So that's something
23 that I--I hope the Mayor--you know, the Mayor and--
24 and the Administration could also help us advocate

1
2 for some more expansion of these programs at the
3 state level. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes,
5 right? Okay. So I have two questions and then
6 Council Member Cornegy, and then we're going to go to
7 our panels. As we all know, beneficiaries who fail
8 to renew their benefits are given a six-months grace
9 period in which to renew at the same frozen rent
10 amount. Recently, the New York Times wrote an
11 article about the struggles of seniors who for one
12 reason or another are not able to renew within the
13 grace period. In those cases, if they do re-enroll,
14 DOF has not been going back and freezing their rents
15 at the previous levels. In some cases this caused
16 senior rents to have jumped by hundreds of dollars.
17 At a May 1st, 2014 hearing before this committee, DOF
18 testified that it did not have the statutory
19 authority to go back and reinstate benefits at the
20 same level once they had expired. However, in the
21 New York Times article DOF is quoted as saying that
22 it would reinstate tenants who missed the renewal
23 deadline at the lower prior rent amount if they were
24 still otherwise qualified for the benefit. Excuse
25 me. Can you please clarify DOF's position on this

1
2 issue and explain what the agency intends to do in
3 these cases as we go forward.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Sure. So
5 I was referring to that in my testimony with the new
6 rules that we promulgated. The May, 2014 article
7 versus the one that came out just a few weeks ago. I
8 can comment on the one that came out a few weeks ago.
9 I don't--I don't remember the actual circumstances of
10 the case from the May 2014, although I think that
11 they were able to come back into the program with
12 their old frozen rent eventually. So, most of the
13 cases that we've seen and the reason that we've
14 drafted these rules is because we were seeing that
15 people were dropping out of the program. And then
16 when we looked at the cases, we saw that they were
17 qualified, and generally they fall under ADA or this
18 other extraordinary circumstances clause that we have
19 in the rules as to why they couldn't renew. And we
20 have been able to put them back at the old frozen
21 rent. I know under the prior administration that we
22 were not doing that, but we have these new rules and
23 this new approach to doing things. And we're hoping
24 that it will help a lot more people so that they
25 don't lose the benefit.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: And just
3 for clarity, moving forward anyone that may fall into
4 this category, they can expect that the rent will be
5 frozen at whatever--how many--

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:
7 [interposing] At the old frozen rent--

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
9 [interposing] Right.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: --as
11 long as they meet what's set out in the rules--

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND:
13 [interposing] Right.

14 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: --and
15 it's a pretty broad definition on purpose.

16 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: That's
17 excellent. I'm glad that your agency is moving in
18 that direction. (sic)

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:
20 [interposing] And you know also just to mention again
21 like the ombudsperson at our taxpayer office like
22 they really do look at cases. So you don't want to
23 see these things happen like we're featured in the
24 articles, right? We want them to get to us before
25 they have to go to the press. So if they felt--for

1
2 whatever reason, we don't catch them in the
3 processing stage, we want our ombudspersons to help
4 them, our taxpayer advocate to help them to navigate,
5 you know, what sometimes is a system that didn't
6 catch them the first time around so that we can get
7 them the second time around.

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: That's
9 great. Can you--can you walk us through the process
10 of what happens when someone who pays a preferential
11 rent applies for SCRIE or DRIE? If an applicant
12 decides not to enroll in the program because they
13 can't afford to pay more than the preferential rent,
14 how does that work, and can they simply withdraw
15 their application and walk away?

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So
17 currently the preferential rent they're stipulated by
18 a rider, and the rider will say for the-the term of
19 the tenancy what the preferential amount is--when
20 they get enrolled into SCRIE and on the approval
21 orders they see that we froze them at the higher
22 amount. They are still allowed to pay because they
23 do have this active agreement with the landlord to
24 pay the lower amount. So they should continue to pay

1
2 their preferential rent because that is an agreement
3 between them and the landlord.

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Do you--
5 do you tell them that? Like at what point do--in
6 this process do you let them know that they can
7 continue to pay the preferential rent?

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I think
9 that that's what we wanted to--to address in the
10 noticing. So we're going to add some additional
11 language in some of our applications as well as some
12 messaging in the notices.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Right
14 because that could be very confusing. People would
15 think well if I apply for this program I'm actually
16 raising my rent. I don't know.

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: And I
19 know that, you know, it's--it's what the bill seeks
20 to address, but your language has to also reflect
21 that.

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: And your
24 communication. So, I'm going to have Council Member
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1
2 Cornegy ask his questions. We've been joined by
3 Council Member Rodriguez, Cumbo, Van Bramer and Rose.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So I just would
5 like to before I ask my next round of questions note
6 that my--my focus on preferential rent is because in
7 my district and districts across the city, it--it
8 affects a huge number of rent regulated tenants. And
9 according to the last IBO Report I think it was 25%
10 of rent related--rent regulated tenants, and by
11 definition they built a huge and unpredictable
12 increases seemingly at the will of these respective
13 landlords. So, that--my focus kind of stemmed from
14 those things that were happening. As it relates to
15 preferential rents and DRIE and SCRIE, how does--how
16 does the Department of Finance instruct its outreach
17 staff to explain this situation to applicants? I
18 know we've talked about it. I don't know if I heard
19 a specific answer to that, and people who inquire
20 about the program whether they be residents, their
21 family or advocates, how does the Department of
22 Finance develop--Has the Department of Finance
23 developed any guidance that explains how preferential
24 rents affect SCRIE and DRIE benefits? So is there
25 any consolidated place that you could come to get

1
2 just that information? Obviously, we've talked about
3 it several ways that it's confusing, but if somebody
4 is inquiring about DRIE and SCRIE, if there are
5 family members who are asking, I don't know if it's
6 been like in one kind of place where you could get
7 this as information.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So it's
9 in our guide that we have, the Comprehensive Guide,
10 which--which talks about what we're going to freeze
11 your rent at. I think that we--we say what happens
12 if it's preferential versus legal rent. You know,
13 it's--it's funny that you mention the outreach. When
14 we started our--our pilot in Brighton Beach, and
15 we're talking to community members, we had a lot of
16 people come to us and say I can't apply for SCRIE
17 because I have preferential rent. We're like yes you
18 can apply for SCRIE even though you have preferential
19 rent, and it--some landlords it turned out from what
20 we heard anecdotally, we're telling people that could
21 not apply for SCRIE if they had preferential rent.
22 Which to us is kind of funny because if you had
23 preferential rent and you apply for the program, your
24 landlord gets the benefit. So they make--they make
25 extra money because you're in SCRIE or DRIE and you

1
2 have preferential rent. And we are trying to engage
3 landlords more to work with--through some of these
4 issues with them. So we always encourage people with
5 preferential rent to apply. I mean one of the
6 reasons that we think it can be helpful to them is
7 that eventually if the landlord does decide to
8 increase their rent to the legal rent, the legal rent
9 will still be frozen at whatever it was when they
10 originally entered into the program. So it can
11 provide some level of protection for them going
12 forward. Where it doesn't help them is we've also
13 heard stories from people where they apply to the
14 program. They have preferential rent and the
15 landlords use SCRIE as an excuse to bring them up to
16 the legal rent. So again, that's anecdotal that
17 we've heard, and there's not much we can do about
18 that, but education people. But for sure all of my
19 outreach staff who are here regularly talk to people
20 out in the field about preferential rent. When we'll
21 freeze it at preferential rent, what that means, and
22 why we still think from where we're sitting it's
23 worth them applying to the program.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Thank you and my
25 first group of questions was around databases and

1
2 data collection. I'd just like to revisit that in my
3 next question for a second. I have a strong hope
4 that the state law on preferential rents will change
5 long before the deadlines set out in the bill to
6 begin tracking both the preferential and the
7 registered rent in the Department of Finance
8 database. But if that doesn't happen, of course, I'd
9 like to see this change happen as soon as possible.
10 I believe if we--we'd had this data, we would have
11 discovered and grappled with the problem sooner. So
12 can you please explain what the limitation is on
13 updating the database that tracked this information
14 even sooner?

15 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So,
16 current--currently we unrolled the--the database
17 December 2014. That was our go live date, and it's--
18 we're--we're hitting our one-year mark with the
19 database. And what that database set out to do is
20 integrate both SCRIE and DRIE, which existed in two
21 separate processing systems. So we've been going
22 through data migration issues with that. So right
23 now we're in the phase where we're kind of working
24 out the kinks, and as soon as those parts are built
25 we also have a phase 2, which is adding more

1
2 functionality for us. So, to add more data elements
3 that's an additional build. So it's--it's just we
4 have to have it built.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So is it--is it
6 a capacity issue?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: What do
8 you mean by capacity?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: In terms of--in
10 terms of build. You said build.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Right.
12 So it--it so we were finishing kind of the bug fixes--
13 -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: [interposing]
15 Uh-huh.

16 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: --and
17 then after the bug fixes then we can add additional
18 functionalities.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So, it--the
20 system does allow for that--

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:
22 [interposing] Yes, yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: --that type of
24 growth and development?
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2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: We've
3 consulted with our FIT Unit and they--they feel that
4 it--it's definitely doable.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Okay. So as I
6 said in my opening remarks the Department of Finance
7 made itself available on multiple occasions to
8 discuss this bill with myself and my office, and I
9 very much appreciate the time and thought you put into
10 this, and I look forward to continuing to work
11 together.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Okay.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
14 you, Council Member. We will now hear from Council
15 Member Rose.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [pause] Thank you,
17 Chairs. You know, I'm Staten Island so, of course, I
18 have Staten Island sort of base question. Is that
19 surprising? But as a whole, Staten Island accounts
20 for less than 1% of those enrolled in SCRIE and DRIE.
21 Can you tell me why that is or what--why it is?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I mean I
23 think a lot of that has to do with the regulated
24 requirement for people that are SCRIE and DRIE. You
25 see a lot of one to three-family homeowners in Staten

1
2 Island, and those are units that can't qualify for
3 SCRIE or DRIE. So I think that that's the main
4 reason why. I mean we do events in Staten Island. We
5 regularly go to all the borough president's meetings.
6 We go to some community board meetings. We
7 participate in events that sort of run the spectrum,
8 although we find that--that more often it's with
9 homeowners or renters in one to three-family homes
10 just because that tends to be more the makeup of
11 Staten Island.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I know that that
13 that's the perception, but we do have a lot of--of
14 rental housing. So--and I understand that making
15 efficient use of limited resources is important and
16 that this has led you sort of to target outreach
17 efforts to neighborhoods with the largest number of
18 un-enrolled eligible households according to DOF's
19 report. Staten Island has one of the highest
20 proportions of non-enrollment, you know, among the
21 boroughs. Have--how are you partnering with local
22 stakeholders and advocacy organizations in low
23 density areas to ensure that the necessary outreach
24 is being done where DOF does not have the--where DOF
25 does not have the capacity or resources to do it.

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2 And to that end, there are buildings on Staten Island
3 that have been identified as currently not rent
4 stabilized, but they should be. Most of these
5 buildings have sizeable numbers of tenants that would
6 qualify for these programs easily were their
7 buildings properly registered. And are you aware of
8 thee efforts, or are you a part of any outreach
9 efforts. Because I know legal services is involved
10 in--in looking into that. So--

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I'm
12 sorry. When you say that the buildings are not rent
13 stabilized, but should be, are they actually
14 regulated by DHCR?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: They--yes, and
16 they're not reported as--as rent stabilized, and so
17 the--the tenants are not aware that they could be
18 eligible for these benefits.

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So I
20 mean, you know, we--we'll be very happy to sort of
21 talk to you after--after this or, you know, follow up
22 with your office to see if you know some of the
23 tenant associations associated with those buildings
24 so that we could talk to them and see how we could
25 get information to the tenants. We've found that

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2 we've had some success with that, you know,
3 particular a tenant association. So like in the
4 Bronx we've been working with Casa New Settlement who
5 works with a lot of tenant associations in the
6 neighborhoods that we're trying to hit. And the
7 tenants to them is like a trusted body, which is very
8 helpful to us in getting our message across. I know
9 it's surprising but the Department of Finance does
10 not tend to be as trusted as some of the community
11 partners. And then in terms of, you know, other ways
12 that we can work with--with Staten Island, I mean,
13 you know, I know--I know that we work with your
14 office and the other electeds in Staten Island
15 specifically on cases that come through when people
16 are asking about these benefits. But if there's any
17 events that we could partner on or other ways that
18 you think that would be helpful to get the word out,
19 we'd be very happy to talk to you about that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And you haven't
21 had--engaged in any efforts to work with legal
22 services?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: Well, we
24 work with a lot of legal providers, and we work with
25

1
2 other community groups and advocacy groups that do
3 touch the citywide.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I'm talking
5 specifically about Staten Island on this particular
6 issue because they are beginning to address this
7 particular issue.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: I--I
9 don't think that we have.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, and is there
11 anything that can be done to streamline the process
12 of outreach to the current enrollees with expired
13 leases? You know, my--my staff spends a lot of time
14 tracking down the current enrollees to determine
15 their status, which, you know, really sort of
16 precludes them from doing significant additional
17 outreach to those tenants that are eligible. Is
18 there any mechanism in place to sort of streamline?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK: So one
20 of the things that I mentioned earlier in my
21 testimony is we will be emailing lists to every
22 Council district that will tell you who in your
23 district has a lease that expired and has not renewed
24 their benefit three months after their lease expired,
25 which still gives them three months to renew the

1
2 benefit. So, right now we send it through central
3 Council staff, but we're going to send it directly to
4 the--to the email--to the Council district offices as
5 well. So something that we'll need to make sure is
6 that we have whatever the email address is that are
7 the best for each of the district office, and we'll
8 need to follow up with you guys about that. We'll
9 call the district offices to figure that out.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
12 you, Council Member Rose. We have additional
13 questions that we're going to forward to--to your
14 agency. If you can get back to us with a response,
15 we'd really appreciate it. Thank you so much for
16 coming--

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:

18 [interposing] Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: --to testify and for
20 partnering with us. I think we've seen a very clear
21 difference in a--what a difference a year makes. So
22 we really appreciate it. Thank you and Council--
23 Chair Chin will call up the next panel. Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Edith Prentiss;
4 Rebecca Haase from Community Service Society; Rena
5 Resnick; and Sue Lehman. [background noise]

6 EDITH PRENTISS: My name is Edith
7 Prentiss. I am the Vice President of DIA, a member
8 of the Board of DNYC, and I am extremely frustrated
9 at this point. This is a hearing about rent freeze.
10 This is not a hearing about--a joint hearing solely
11 of seniors and finance. It is a hearing on rent
12 freeze. What is rent freeze? Rent freeze, SCRIE and
13 DRIE. So obviously, if you have a hearing on rent
14 freeze why aren't we discussing DRIE (sic) as equally
15 as SCRIE. One of the important issues to acknowledge
16 is the difference in the populations. Number one,
17 when we talk about that rollback, I was deemed
18 disabled in 2000 at which point my rent was \$600. My
19 Social Security was about \$1,000. Since then, my
20 rent is now \$1,100 and my Social Security is about
21 \$15,000. Now, let's talk about the ratio there.
22 That ratio is ridiculous. I worked for 15--17 years
23 as a contractor worker for DFTA. I did lots of SCRIE
24 applications over the years. SCRIE applications used
25 to be really simple. There are basically five pieces
of information you need: Age, income, rent, et

1
2 cetera. Not Section 8, one third of the income.
3 When you get to DRIE, you now have to break out of
4 all the income sources, which is a little silly. How
5 it wasn't just--I mean the--the explanation is enough
6 to make anyone's eyes rattle. If you were to sit
7 down and figure out where your income went and that
8 information, you would never apply for DRIE. Also,
9 when we talk about all the places you can go for
10 help, we look at senior centers. We don't have a
11 network of programs. How many of your offices are
12 accessible? How many of the libraries are
13 accessible? You're now talking about the DRIE
14 population really having none of--no access to this,
15 and to be perfectly honest, the independent centers
16 of which there are five, they aren't specialized in
17 this. When I started at DFTA agency I had a solid
18 week of training for all of this stuff. No one does
19 that otherwise. It's really very--I--I actually did
20 contact Andy's--And Cohen's office and was told they
21 would extend. I also have been going back and forth
22 with Victor's office with MOPED. I really feel it's
23 wrong somehow not to have the disability program be
24 it the committee or MOPED not here. [bell] This is
25 completely wrong. If there's a conflict, maybe it

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2 gets---maybe it needs to be rescheduled. But I--I'm
3 really totally outraged that we heard repeatedly
4 senior centers list this, that, all of these are the
5 outreach you're doing for seniors, and I never heard
6 one word about the outreach that's being done for
7 DRIE, and that's the problem. There is no database.
8 Where does that database come from? That database is
9 your senior center registrations. We don't have
10 senior centers. We don't have services. We're not a
11 database. There is no effective way for the outreach
12 to be done. We need to look at it totally
13 differently. We also have to look at the fact that
14 every time someone holds a resource fair, it's a
15 senior resource fair. Senator Sanders just sent out
16 an email. It's a senior resource fair. All of you to
17 see. Bottom line is we don't get a whole lot of
18 resources. I mean we don't get the EPIC. Maybe if
19 we got EPIC we could afford to pay our rent without
20 being in a donor hall. But the bottom line is it's a
21 totally different population with many different
22 problems, and we also never accept or--and DOF's
23 report does not address the fact that we were not
24 eligible for SCRIE. And then when we--we became
25 eligible for SCRIE, we got shafted in the amount of

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2 income. Only did we get--after there was a general
3 uproar--after they increased the SCRIE Act--the SCRIE
4 to 50,000 did we get raised. It's been a program of
5 institutional discrimination since day one and that
6 rollback would certainly and adequate compensation.
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you
9 Edith. You may begin.

10 Hi. I'm just going to highlight certain
11 areas in my testimony to stay with the three minutes.

12 Good afternoon, Chairperson Chin, Chairperson
13 Ferreras-Copeland and members of the New York City
14 Committee on Aging and the Committee on Finance. My
15 name is Rebecca Haase and I'm the Program Director of
16 the Community Services Society's Financial Advocacy
17 Program. Thank you for the opportunity to provide
18 testimony on the City's efforts to conduct outreach
19 and increase enrollment in the Rent Freeze Program.
20 CSS is 170-year-old organization that works to
21 promote policies and create programs that advance the
22 economic security of low income and moderate New
23 Yorkers. Through its Financial Advocacy Program we
24 train older adult volunteers to provide public
25 benefit counseling and financial coaching. This year

1
2 we receive a grant from the New York Community Trust
3 to conduct outreach specifically on SCRIE and DRIE.
4 The rent--our Rent Freeze Outreach Program has a
5 unique approach as its primary goal is application
6 assistance. We strive to educate potential
7 applicants about eligibility--the eligibility
8 criteria and the documents needed to apply. This
9 structure enables us to fully assist the applicant
10 with the application process. Our project works
11 closely with and in support of the Department of
12 Finance and HPD, and we've conducted several outreach
13 events with the Department of Finance. We want to
14 thank them for their outreach efforts. They've
15 created a useful website and an excellent guide, and
16 we use their materials daily in our work with
17 clients. In the report conducted by the Department
18 of Finance, they--there--there's 94,000 potential
19 applicants not enrolled in SCRIE. Based on our
20 outreach experience we feel that it's very difficult
21 to reach this population. There's--and there's many
22 challenges that need to be overcome. One of the main
23 challenges has to do with issues related to housing
24 concerns and issues with the landlords, and that also
25 includes people that are not in the correct type of

1 housing, no longer rent stabilized. Potential
2 applicants are often worried about how applying for
3 SCRIE and DRIE will affect their relationship with
4 the landlord. They often don't have the prior lease
5 or the current lease signed by the landlord. Another
6 challenge is getting the message out on a larger
7 scale to those who may be unfamiliar with the
8 program. We feel this could be accomplished through
9 working with other government agencies and
10 institutions and through larger scale marketing
11 campaigns. If seniors hear the message from trusted
12 institutions or through New York sponsored media
13 campaign, we feel that they'll feel entitled to the
14 program and less fearful about applying. Recommend--
15 our recommendations include working closely with non-
16 profits that are doing outreach on the Rent Freeze
17 Program to find out what works best and to develop
18 best practices, and to invest city resources in
19 programs like our Rent Freeze Outreach Program and
20 similar programs, which are solely dedicated to
21 finding and assisting potential eligible seniors. We
22 also look at requiring New York City employers to
23 share information [bell] on the New York City Rent
24 Freeze Program with their retirees as that's a great
25

1 way to reach potential people who are--who are going
2 to take early retirement. So that's when they're
3 first eligible, and also working with the Social
4 Security Administration when people apply for
5 retirement or Social Security Disability Insurance
6 they could be--also be given this information.
7 There--that--again, CCS supports the City Council in
8 your efforts to pass legislation, and we look forward
9 to working with you in the future.

11 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank
12 you.

13 RENA RESNICK: Thank you Chairs Ferreras-
14 Copeland and Chin and the committees for inviting us
15 to speak today. My name is Rena Resnick and I am the
16 Public Affairs Manager of the Metropolitan Council on
17 Jewish Poverty. We applaud the City Council for its
18 efforts to increase transparency and accessibility
19 for the Rent Freeze Program, and support Council
20 Member Cornegy's bill. For more than four decades,
21 Met Council has supported and championed families,
22 seniors and adults living in poverty and near
23 poverty. Met Council provides immediate assist--
24 assistance to New Yorkers in crisis and creates
25 pathways to self-sufficiency through many programs.

1
2 Our grassroots Jewish Community Council Network
3 including Shorefront (sic) JCC, which was mentioned
4 earlier today, provides support for families and
5 their neighborhoods right where they live. We
6 leverage government contracts with privately raised
7 funds to increase the impact of our services. Since
8 Met Council's inception, time for seniors has been
9 our entire mission. Many of our clients worked their
10 entire lives, and when they become too frail to work
11 their lack of a deep and wide enough safety net makes
12 it difficult for them to remain safely in the homes
13 that they love. To address these needs, Met Council
14 created its first geriatric services--services
15 manager to create all of our services offered to
16 seniors to ensure that they are the most effective,
17 efficient and compassionate. In addition, the three-
18 -nationally with three and five eligible seniors not
19 enrolled in SNAP, Met Council was awarded a private
20 grant from the National Council on Aging to hire a
21 caseworker to conduct outreach and screen older
22 adults for SNAP benefits. To ensure that this
23 vulnerable population is served with dignity and is
24 educated on all services they are entitled to, we
25 work diligently on our outreach efforts in order to

1
2 connect with seniors, and help inform and enroll them
3 into available benefits we've utilized a few simple
4 but critical tools including tailoring to the
5 neighborhood where live. Creating initial pre-
6 screening--pre-screening questions in clients in need
7 of languages; home visits for frail or homebound
8 seniors; utilizing volunteers; and creating
9 comprehensive follow-up plans. Last summer when the
10 City Council and the Administration increased the
11 income qualifications for SCRIE, Met Council together
12 with the Department of Finance helped for SCRIE
13 enrollment plans in order to assist clients with
14 enrollment into the program and avoid future rent
15 increases. In coordination with the city's
16 Department of Finance, our housing state stack and
17 volunteers we're able to house 70 seniors into the
18 program by bringing the application to them, and by
19 creating a document checklist in both English and in
20 Russian. his summer we received many clients from--
21 many calls from clients who found re-enrolling
22 challenging. We refer clients to the Department of
23 Finance for assistance. When issues of re-enrollment
24 arise with other benefits such as SNAP or Medicare
25 our staff is both funded and trained to assist

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2 clients. We believe that if there was a--if there
3 were funding available for service providers to
4 facilitate outreach and enrollment for the Rent
5 Freeze Program similar to the system available under
6 HRA to increase access to SNAP, additional seniors
7 will participate and remain in the Rent Freeze
8 Program. [bell] In conclusion, Met Council cannot
9 continue providing critical services without the
10 vital partnership of City Council. Thank you so
11 much.

12 SUE LEHMAN: Thank you. I was--I was out
13 of the country from 1973 to 2007. I had never heard
14 of preferential or market rates. I certainly was not
15 informed when I signed my lease, and yes mea culpa, I
16 did not read it. I was turned down after apply for
17 SCRIE, and then got involved with the housing
18 committee of our neighborhood association. It's
19 ironic that each time we do a SCRIE/DRIE outreach we
20 are faced with blank looks and stares and shrugs.
21 When we ask if they are preferential renters they
22 have no idea what we're talking about. This is
23 especially true with immigrants who do not speak
24 English and old people who could most benefit from
25 SCRIE. It still is not clear to me how you get a

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2 preferential rate. I didn't ask for it. The
3 landlord gave it to me. Therefore, I should not be
4 penalized because the preferential rate is \$1,200
5 less than the market rate of that apartment. All
6 seniors should be getting SCRIE if they qualify. I
7 don't see--the Catch 22 is really that we don't know
8 how the preferential and the market rate really
9 works. And it's very difficult to explain it to
10 older people. In closing, without SCRIE, I will be
11 leaving my apartment after this next lease as I can
12 no longer afford the rent. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Questions?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So I don't--I
15 don't actually have a question, but I do want to say
16 to Sue, I want to--I want to thank you for allowing
17 me to use your story as really the basis for this
18 legislation. I think what you've experienced ticks
19 every single box of why this is important, and so for
20 me just thank you for allowing me for you not to be
21 shamed into telling me your story, and being the face
22 of this legislation. As really--I really want to
23 thank you.

24 SUE LEHMAN: And I thank you. [laughs]
25 We all do.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So Sue, right now you
3 are getting the SCRIE benefits?

4 SUE LEHMAN: I am paying a preferential
5 rate of \$1,125. The market rate for my apartment, so
6 they say, is \$2,393. In order for me to qualify for
7 SCRIE I must start to pay \$2,393 at my next lease.
8 No, before my next lease. My next lease is up for
9 renewal next month. It will probably go up another
10 \$60 or \$80, but I don't qualify unless I pay that
11 higher rate. Now I never asked for that rent. I
12 never asked for the rent to be \$1,100. They gave it
13 to me. I thought it was a great bargain. Nobody
14 explained to me that I had a preferential rate, and
15 it wasn't explained until our housing committee
16 started working in the neighborhood in the area to
17 get people to sign up for SCRIE. If--if they gave it
18 to me at \$1,100, it means that I could never have
19 afforded it for the market rate. So why should I be
20 penalized Let him be penalized.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But in the--when the
22 Department of Finance was testifying, it sounded like
23 the landlord would be getting the increase on the
24 regular rent. They're actually getting more
25 benefits.

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SUE LEHMAN: Who?

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: The landlord. I mean the earlier-the earlier testimony, right. What we heard from the Commissioner that was testifying for the Department of Finance.

SUE LEHMAN: Not true. I don't understand the question.

COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So, so that's why I'm glad that the Department of Finance decided to--to stay so that they could actually heard this. Often times that's not the case. The Administration leaves. It's difficult for them to respond, though, in this exchange, but it's my understanding that you can--you can stay in your apartment and pay the preferential rent through SCRIE.

SUE LEHMAN: Yeah, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: I'm sorry.

SUE LEHMAN: I can't get it. I've been turned down for SCRIE. I have been turned down for SCRIE.

REBECCA HAASE: It's market rate? Market rate?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Right, so--so--
3 okay, I'm sorry. So they can't freeze her at the
4 preferential rate.

5 SUE LEHMAN: If I went up to the--the
6 market rate, I would be allowed to have SCRIE and
7 DRIE. They would approve SCRIE for me.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So I have at
9 least six very notable people in this room shaking
10 their heads no. So we are going to absolutely--no,
11 no, no, no. So Sue, you're in the right place today.

12 SUE LEHMAN: Yeah.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: We are going to
14 get an answer for you before you leave here.

15 SUE LEHMAN: [interposing] I was turned
16 down--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Because there
18 seems like a serious discrepancy.

19 SUE LEHMAN: --by SCRIE and the answer
20 was you will get SCRIE. You qualify for the SCRIE if
21 you pay your market rate.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: The bosses are
23 saying no. So we're going to--we're going to get to
24 the bottom of this. So you don't--you don't leave.

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2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [interposing] Yeah,
3 but I mean--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Until we get to
5 the bottom--

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --we can connect you
7 directly with--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: --until we get
9 to the bottom of it.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --the Assistant
11 Commissioner--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: If somebody can
13 grab her please as she leaves the premises.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --from Department of
15 Finance--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --and we're going to
18 straighten that out. Sue, see, aren't you glad you
19 came today. [laughter] Okay, so we want to thank
20 this panel, and then we're going to call up the next
21 panel. Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: And--and as the
23 next panel is coming up, I--I just want to take an
24 opportunity to again thank the Department of Finance
25 for staying. I think this is--this is part of the

1
2 reason that we asked that. We don't always--we're
3 not always granted that liberty--

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KARASYK:

5 [interposing] Yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: --but this is an
7 opportunity to make something wrong right.

8 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Molly
9 Perkowski (SP?) for JASA; Donna Doltrie--oh, Darby
10 from JASA Legal Services; Gasalia Grover and Matthew-
11 -Matthew Checker.

12 MATTHEW CHACHERE: [off mic] Chachere.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Oh, Chachere. Sorry.
14 [background comments] Well, thank you for being
15 here. You want to start? Please identify yourself
16 for the record.

17 DELSENIA GLOVER: Good afternoon. Thank
18 you to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on
19 Aging for the opportunity to testify today. My name
20 is Delsenia Glover. I am with an organization called
21 Tenant and Neighbors, New York State Tenant and
22 Neighbors Information Service and New York State
23 Tenants and Neighbors Coalition. I am also the
24 Campaign Manager for the Alliance for Tenant Power,
25 which is a coalition of organizations that are

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2 concerned with housing and tenants rights and
3 advocacy for tenants. In the buildings where we
4 organize the story is the same. Low to moderate
5 income tenants in New York City are regularly
6 experiencing the pressures of displacement. Rents
7 are climbing and tenants are concerned that they will
8 not be able to afford to stay in their homes and
9 their communities. For preferential rent tenants
10 this is a particularly fearsome situation. For one,
11 many tenants do not know what it really means to be a
12 preferential rent tenant as evidenced by the last
13 panel. Until the landlord decides to raise the rent
14 to the so-called legal regulated rent, where in some
15 cases previous increases have been in accordance with
16 the Rent Guidelines Board. Last week, I sat in a
17 room with preferential rent tenants whose landlord is
18 this year increasing all rents far above the RGB
19 increases, many to the legal regulated rent, which
20 may be hundreds of dollars above the preferential
21 rent. And some of these--and some of these tenants
22 are 62 years old. In some cases retired on fixed
23 incomes, and when we look at rent histories it is
24 clear that some of these so-called legal regulated
25 rents must be illegal because the jumps between

1 leases are too high to be plausible. This year in
2 particular is significant because the rent laws were
3 renewed this past June and nothing moved on
4 preferential rent legislation with the exception of a
5 minor fix that has nothing to do with those currently
6 living in those apartments. Preferential rent units
7 have risen to the level of more than 27% of the
8 city's rent regulated housing, hundreds of thousands
9 of units. If we do not pay careful attention to
10 first how landlords increase legal regulated rents
11 and if they are legal and second make landlords
12 explain in specific language what preferential rent
13 means for new tenants, landlords will have free reign
14 to perpetuate this practice of bait and switch, and
15 all the tenants will continue to find themselves in
16 an untenable situation. For the first half of this
17 year, Tenants and Neighbors are now allies in the
18 tenant movement lobbying to change laws in Albany to
19 repeal vacancy deregulations and close loopholes that
20 created the affordable housing crisis. Our platform
21 included a bill that would have made the preferential
22 rent the legal rent for the life of the tenancy and
23 increases would have been an average of the Rent
24 Guideline Board increases. [bell] It did not pass
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1
2 the Sate Senate, unfortunately. So on behalf of
3 Tenants and Neighbors, I am here to stand in support
4 of 798-A to require the Department of Finance to be
5 sure that tenants are properly informed of what a
6 preferential lease means, that the leases are legally
7 worded, and that the department begin tracking data
8 on preferential rents immediately. Thank you very
9 much for this opportunity

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

11 DONNA DARBY: Good afternoon. I'd like
12 to thank the New York City Council's Aging and
13 Finance Committees for hosting today's hearing.
14 Thank you, Chairperson Chin and also to--Council
15 Member Cornegy for this legislation. JASA welcomes
16 the opportunity to comment on Intro 798-A regarding
17 the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption and
18 Disability Rent Increase Exemption. JASA is a non-
19 profit agency serving the needs of older adults in
20 the Greater New York area with programming that
21 promotes independence, safety, wellness, community
22 participation and an enhanced quality of life for New
23 York City's older adults. The program reach over
24 43,000 clients and include home care, case management
25 services, senior centers, NORC supportive services,

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2 home delivered meals, caregiver support, continuing
3 education licenses, mental health, housing advocacy,
4 legal services, adult protective services, and
5 guardianship services. The SCRIE and DRIE programs
6 are created by New York State enabling legislation
7 and adopted in New York City to ameliorate the
8 effects of ever-increasing rents, and thereby to
9 prevent the eviction of elderly and disabled tenants
10 from their homes and communities. For eligible
11 tenants, living in rent controlled rent stabilized
12 Mitchell Lama and certain other regulated--rent
13 regulated apartments, SCRIE and DRIE program freezes
14 the tenant's rent payments, and provides landlords
15 with dollar for dollar tax abatement to cover
16 specific legal rent increases. We've discussed the
17 eligibility already. JASA supports Intro 798-A,
18 which would provide tenants with much needed clarity
19 on their benefit. The Administrative Code would be
20 amended to include information on their rent status
21 whether they have preferential rent or registered
22 rent, and how the benefit is calculated. The
23 information would also be readily available to the
24 Department of Finance in case there are complaints of
25 rent overcharge or other issues, which arise. The

1
2 current system is often confusing for tenants who
3 have preferred rent, but apply to SCRIE and find out
4 it was based on the registered rent for the
5 apartment, and the result leaves tenants paying a
6 higher rate, and financially vulnerable. JASA would
7 like the Council to consider further amendments to
8 the rent income eligibility by expanding the list of
9 types of income that are excluded from the definition
10 of income. Adding to the list of allowable
11 deductions, specifically by allowing a deduction for
12 health related expenses, and allow program
13 participants whose benefits are terminated due to--
14 due to receipt of extra countable income that puts
15 them over the income limit in a given year to have
16 their prior frozen share of the rent reinstated in
17 the future upon reapplication if the income drops
18 below the income cap. So I was happy to hear that
19 earlier. Currently, the only specific exclusions
20 from the statutory definition of income are gifts,
21 inheritance, Nazi victim (sic) operations and to a
22 limited extent certain cost of living increases in
23 retirement benefits. The only deductions that are
24 permitted are payment of taxes and child support.
25 There are no deductions for health related expenses

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2 such as Medicare B premium or other health insurance
3 premiums or out-of-pocket medical expenses. There is
4 no asset or resource limit for the SCRIE program, but
5 interest earned on assets such savings [bell] or
6 brokerage accounts can constitute income. As it
7 stands, the current income definitions cause
8 irreparable harm to certain seniors some of whom may
9 have been in the program for many years. Sorry.
10 Finally, there are many eligible tenants who are
11 unaware of the SCRIE and DRIE programs, and clearly
12 there's a need for vigorous public awareness campaign
13 and much greater outreach. Often seniors apply for
14 the program later than when they were first eligible,
15 and as a result the rent is frozen at a higher rate.
16 Perhaps the City should require landlords to include
17 a notice about SCRIE and DRIE, and I was happy to
18 hear Council Member Chin mix 621, which we obviously
19 will be supportive of. And we would like to thank
20 you again for the opportunity to testify today, and
21 we'd be happy to be of further assistance. I know
22 JASA, Luna Park was part of the pilot. We have over
23 24 senior centers. We're happy to be--and NORCs. We
24 have a bunch of NORCs. I'm happy to be helpful.
25 Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. [pause.

MATTHEW CHACHERE: Hi. I'm Matthew Chachere from the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation. I'm giving testimony on behalf of my organization, Cardozo Bet Tzedek Legal Services and Legal Services for the Elderly of Queens. Our three agencies are counsel in a class action against the Department of Finance called *Pfeffer*, which is a challenge to DOS policies under the Americans with Disabilities Act. I've submitted some very lengthy testimony. I'm not going to repeat it in any detail here. Let me just tell you where that case came about. Our agencies are deluged with cases that come to us where people were in Housing Court. They're elderly, they're disabled. They're being evicted. The reason they're being evicted is because they're behind in their rent. The reason they're behind in their rent is that year--sometimes years after their SCRIE or DRIE benefits disappeared they suddenly find this out because the landlord never adjusted their books and continued to credit them as getting the tax benefits. And then, all of a sudden they find out that guess what, you owe \$10,000, \$20,000. And so, we counsel them, and try to get their cases reopened,

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2 and the Department of Finance's policy has been say,
3 sorry. It's too late. You can reapply now for
4 benefits. In many of these instances the rents
5 aren't--they'll freeze the rents at the--where the
6 rents are now. Sometimes the rents have gone up so
7 much they're actually more than the total income of
8 our clients. So then what do we do? We try these
9 appeals. They say it's too late. You had six
10 months. So then we have to bring an Article 78 case
11 in the Supreme Court and get a stay against the
12 Housing Court and litigate it out with the City. It
13 uses our resources, which are sometimes funded by the
14 City. The City sends in their lawyers to fight it
15 vigorously. I was just in the Supreme Court last
16 month and the city's lawyers were arguing, Sorry, but
17 there's a limited amount of SCRIE money. So that's
18 why we have to do this. And, you know, in the end
19 the City ultimately would be pushed into settling
20 most of these cases, not all of them. And they would
21 not reinstate them retroactively. They'd say go off
22 to--to HRA. Get a one-shot deal. You know, this is--
23 --this is the epitome of individual decisions that are
24 rational, but collectively totally irrational. It's
25 a complete waste of resources of everybody's time to

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2 be having such an intricate system to deal with
3 really what shouldn't be that complicated a problem.
4 So that's why we ended up bringing the *Pfeffer* case
5 this year, and it was only after we brought that case
6 that the department began to formulate new rules, and
7 I think that's been a very important step. And
8 there's been changes from the initial rules to the
9 final rules that were published this week. But we
10 think there's more that has to be done. We think the
11 rules are a start, but we still don't think they're
12 [bell] in compliance with the Americans with
13 Disabilities Act. I'm just going to list four major-
14 -major areas. They're--they're outlined in our
15 remarks. First of all, I think the--the
16 documentation requirements for the medical conditions
17 are much too high. They don't accord with--with the
18 Americans with Disabilities Act, which calls for
19 reasonable documentation. Secondly, it doesn't seem
20 to provide enough flexibility to allow people other
21 than doctors or medical providers to provide the
22 information about the need to make an accommodation.
23 Sometimes people don't even have doctors, or if they
24 do, it takes--I end up having to spend months trying
25 to browbeat some overworked doctor to write a letter

1 for me or an affidavit so I can go to the Department
2 of Finance. So it should be just a family member eve
3 or social worker can refer this information that this
4 person has a disability. Thirdly, I think there
5 needs to be notice--adequate notices in--in the--in
6 the denial letters that if you have a disability you
7 have a right to apply for an extension of time.
8 We're concerned that the original bill said they
9 would only be doing this under extraordinary medical
10 circumstances, which is again way too stringent for
11 the ADA requirements. That language, which is no
12 longer in the rules, but it's still in the preface to
13 the rules. So we're concerned how this is going to
14 play out, and we think it's important that the
15 Department of Finance go back and review all the
16 cases that--where people have come off their SCRIE
17 benefits to see whether, in fact, their--those folks
18 might have, in fact, had a viable disability reason
19 for not getting--getting back into the program. I
20 mean we are still litigating these--a number of these
21 cases and the City has not backed down on--on many of
22 them. So I think there's been a major change in--in-
23 -in the way the Department of Finance is reacting to
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2 these. We've in--we appreciate it, but I think more
3 needs to be done . Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Any questions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: No, I--I don't
6 have any questions, but I just wanted to for the
7 record say that I was going to submit testimony on
8 behalf of the Crown Heights Tenant's Union who
9 actually is involved in an action on preferential
10 rents right now as we speak, or they would have been
11 here. So they've submitted testimony for the record.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, thank you. I
13 wanted to thank all of you for coming in to testify,
14 and definitely we will review your testimony, and
15 thank you for being here today. We're going to work
16 with the Department of Finance, and see how we can,
17 you know, make some changes and also get some more
18 legislation passed that can help more people qualify
19 for the program, and-- So, thank you for being here
20 today.

21 MATTHEW CHACHERE: Council--Council
22 Member--

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [interposing] Yes.

24 MATTHEW CHACHERE: --can I just point out
25 one other thing that's--that's slightly off what my

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2 testimony was, but it occurred to me while we were
3 discussing the issue with DHCR. There's a--there's a
4 different issue that I've run into a lot, at least in
5 the community that I work. We have a lot of tenants
6 with rent reduction orders that are issued by DHCR.
7 There seems to be no mechanism whatsoever where--
8 where the Department of Finance is--is interfacing
9 with DHCR to see, in fact, if those rents are legal.
10 And in many instances, they're not. You know,
11 there's an order from DHCR that says there are
12 conditions in this apartment. You cannot pay more
13 than this for rent, and--and there--you know, but
14 there--these landlords continue to collect the tax
15 credit for an amount of rent that they're legally not
16 allowed to collect by DHCR. It would save the City
17 some money. It would improve getting the conditions
18 fixed in these folks' apartments. So, I commend
19 that.

20 DELSENIA GLOVER: I just wanted to--

21 MATTHEW CHACHERE: [off mic]

22 DELSENIA GLOVER: --I just wanted to say

23 that there was so much--there was so much

24 misinformation in the tenant--the last tenant who sat

25

1 here and spoke about what her situation is, and it's-
2 -it's utterly frightening, but it's not uncommon.

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4 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: And--and it's
5 really sad because we--we've worked with her, and
6 she's still somewhat confused. So I can imagine
7 somebody who hasn't had the opportunity to--to get
8 any information at all how--how confusing it is in
9 that sense.

10 DELSENIA GLOVER: Well, one--one--one
11 note of clarity, and that is that market rate tenants
12 are not eligible for SCRIE, and she and apparently it
13 seems that her landlord told her that if her rent is
14 at the market level, then she would be eligible--
15 eligible for SCRIE, which is absolutely false so--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you all. The
18 hearing is adjourned. Thank you. [gavel]

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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 December 29, 2015