

Thank you for your invitation to testify today before the Joint Public Hearing to assess rental assistance programs and examine the need for expanded residential rental assistance to prevent tenant hardships. The New York Apartment Association is a housing advocacy organization dedicated to improving the quality and affordability of housing through policy changes that benefit both renters and their housing providers. We represent the property owners and managers who provide the vast majority of unsubsidized affordable housing in New York City.

The senior citizens rent increase exemption and the disability rent increase exemption - commonly known as SCRIE and DRIE- are two effective programs that limit the rent apportionment and future increases borne by fixed-income senior citizens and those with disabilities. Both SCRIE and DRIE benefit tenants by creating a forum in which the renters' total rent is broken down into two portions; the first portion is the SCRIE and DRIE residents payment amount that subsequently becomes fixed at a level commensurate with their income, while the remainder, including all future increases are paid by the City. These important government programs solve two current issues facing NYC's housing market - a program to protect renters in need of supplemental economic support as well as resources directed to housing providers whereby these resources are used for building maintenance and tenant services.

This success of these programs is undisputed. When focusing on eviction prevention, the easy answer is that these programs should be expanded to meet more individuals' housing needs. Increasing the income thresholds would open these programs to more fixed-income seniors and disabled individuals such as bill S.1457A, sponsored by Senator Kavanagh, proposes to do. Likewise, establishing a level of tenant rental participation based on their income be implemented as S.2451A, also sponsored by Senator Kavanagh, would do.

In fact, we would even go further to suggest that the SCRIE/DRIE model could provide an already functioning framework for a residential assistance program for all lower-income New Yorkers, irrespective of age. The creation of a low income rent increase exemption could be a consequential legislative initiative to provide rental assistance to help lower income New Yorkers remain in their homes while also providing the necessary resources for housing providers to continue to maintain and service their tenants.

Other improvements to minimize paperwork, application hurdles, and eliminate penalties for applicant missteps provide greater clarity and reduce obstacles for qualified beneficiaries, such as those set forth on today's agenda, also are welcome.

The SCRIE and DRIE programs work because they incorporate a straightforward solution that achieves its mission of providing a mechanism in which the City absorbs a portion of the rent burden, thus increasing housing security, while concurrently ensuring steady and increasing revenue so that housing quality, operations and maintenance are not impacted.