

Greetings Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on Aging,

My name is Nicole W. Simmons, and I am the Assistant Commissioner for Government Affairs at the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development, writing on behalf of the Department's Division of Housing Supervision.

The Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption Program (SCRIE) provides crucial housing affordability assistance to vulnerable New Yorkers. In fiscal year 2023, over 6,000 senior New Yorkers living in affordable housing developments received such assistance. To be eligible for SCRIE, an applicant's combined household income must be less than \$50,000, the applicant must be at least sixty-two years old, and the applicant's rent must be one-third or more of their household income.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development administers SCRIE for tenants in affordable housing, including City-aided Mitchell Lama developments. In addition to administering the program, our staff is active in encouraging enrollment of eligible seniors in SCRIE. We routinely hold workshops and work with residents to help them complete applications at critical times when rent or carrying charge increases have been approved for their developments. We will continue to prioritize promoting SCRIE through our portfolio and we share the Council's desire to streamline the process. We look forward to working with the Council to find more ways to do that in the future.

Regarding Introduction 985, while we support the spirit of this bill, we have concerns regarding the provisions as written. HPD does not have income data in the digitized format needed to pre-populate SCRIE applications efficiently. Accomplishing this with current resources would require that we review and pull data manually for tens of thousands of residents. Digitizing this information would pose a significant financial and operational burden. Also, many of our eligible residents are below the threshold income at which the filing of income verification forms is required. As such, HPD would not have any access to their income data. Relying on income verification forms would exclude those residents in the greatest need of assistance.

We further have concerns about providing SCRIE enrollment forms to seniors in the absence of a pending rent or carrying charge increase at a development. This could upset or frighten seniors into thinking that their required payments are going up. Instead, these forms should only be provided where an increase is pending and the SCRIE benefit can offset the increase.

Our goal, like yours, is to ensure that the SCRIE application process is as easy as possible and that all eligible residents in need of assistance take advantage of this benefit. We look forward to working with the Council to reach these potential recipients and believe that by directing housing companies or their managing agents to provide SCRIE enrollment forms to

eligible seniors facing rent or carrying charge increases, with an explanatory letter from HPD with relevant instructions, we will accomplish this goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this topic. I look forward to continued conversations.

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Fenton

Address: [REDACTED] Astoria, NY 11026

I represent: VOLÉ

Address: 42 W 4th St Suite 829, NY, NY 10012

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Name: Raul Rivera

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: [REDACTED]

Address: [REDACTED]

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