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COUNCIL MEMBERS CHIN AND FERRERAS INTRODUCE NEW LEGISLATION TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT IN THE NYC RENT FREEZE PROGRAM

SCRIE and DRIE Provide a Rent Freeze to Senior and Disabled Tenants Who Are Struggling Financially; New Legislation Will Make More Tenants Aware That They Are Already Eligible for a Rent Freeze

Today, Council Members Margaret Chin and Julissa Ferreras introduced new legislation aimed at increasing enrollment in the [NYC Rent Freeze Program](#), also known as SCRIE (Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption) and DRIE (Disability Rent Increase Exemption).

The legislation, ([Int. 621](#)), would require landlords of all buildings covered under the NYC Rent Freeze Program to send a mailed notice about the program—including eligibility requirements and enrollment information—to all their tenants, alongside annual lease renewal forms.

New Yorkers are eligible for a rent freeze under the NYC Rent Freeze Program if they:

- Rent an apartment that is regulated by the state's Division of Housing and Community Renewal (i.e. rent-stabilized units, rent-controlled units, rent-regulated hotel units) or is within a Mitchell-Lama development.
- Have a total household income of \$50,000 or less.
- Spend more than one-third of their monthly household income on rent.
- Are either over 62 years of age, or receive Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs disability pension or compensation, or disability-related Medicaid (if the applicant has received either SSI or SSDI in the past).

In mid-2014, the NYC Rent Freeze Program was vastly expanded when the maximum eligible income was raised from \$29,000 to \$50,000. That expansion was the result of state-level action, and was enacted at the city level after corresponding legislation by Council Member Chin was passed by the Council and signed into law.

However, a December 2014 report by the city's Department of Finance, which administers the NYC Rent Freeze Program, showed that only 39 percent of New Yorkers eligible for a rent freeze had actually enrolled in the program. According to that report, approximately 94,000 senior or disabled tenants are eligible for a rent freeze but have not yet enrolled.

The new legislation by Council Members Chin and Ferreras would expand the outreach for the NYC Rent Freeze Program beyond the community forums and digital/social media outreach that has been and continues to be undertaken by the Department of Finance and the City Council. By requiring landlords to mail information about the program directly to tenants in their homes, the legislation will make sure that senior and disabled tenants will be able to learn about the NYC Rent Freeze Program even if they are homebound or do not have internet access.

“The NYC Rent Freeze Program, also known as SCRIE and DRIE, helps protect some of our city’s most vulnerable tenants from the rising costs that can tragically lead to homelessness,” **said Council Member Margaret Chin, Chair of the Council’s Committee on Aging.** “Last year I was proud to help vastly expand eligibility for this vital program, but unfortunately we are still not seeing enough eligible tenants apply for a rent freeze that would have a hugely positive impact on their lives. The City Council and the de Blasio administration have done a lot of great work to promote the program through social media and community forums, but we must also take steps to reach senior and disabled tenants directly in their homes. This new legislation will do just that, by requiring landlords to include information about the NYC Rent Freeze Program alongside the lease renewal forms that are delivered to their tenants. With this direct outreach to senior and disabled tenants, I know we will be able to increase enrollment so these tenants can finally get the life-changing rent freeze that they are already eligible to receive.”

“The Council’s Finance Committee is focused on maintaining transparent and equitable agencies to ensure that City benefits are accessible to all,” **said Council Member Julissa Ferreras, Chair of the Council’s Committee on Finance.** “The Department of Finance, which administers the NYC Rent Freeze Program, must do its part to increase enrollment into SCRIE and DRIE, but landlords have a role to play as well. Council Member Chin’s new legislation taps that previously overlooked resource, proactively augmenting the program’s reach — it has the potential to improve the lives of 94,000 individuals who are eligible for a rent freeze and don’t yet know it.”

"New York City residents age 50 and older are finding it increasingly difficult to afford the ever rising costs of housing," **said Christopher Widelo, Associate State Director for AARP New York.** "Education on eligibility and enrollment for rental assistance programs is critical in helping older NYC residents on limited incomes. We applaud Council Member Chin for introducing this legislation and for her continued work as a champion for older NYC residents."

"LiveOn NY supports Council Member Margaret Chin's introduction of legislation requiring landlords to include information about the NYC Rent Freeze Program with lease renewals," **said Bobbie Sackman, Director of Public Policy for LiveOn NY (formerly known as CSCS).** "Tens of thousands of older New Yorkers pay more than 50 percent of their income in rent. Many seniors access the NYC Rent Freeze Program in crisis and are left paying more than 50 percent of their income in rent, leaving them on the fiscal cliff. Enrolling earlier can be the difference between affording your rent, food and health care and risking homelessness. This legislation is a commonsense way to inform older New Yorkers of this valuable program."

“The New York Academy of Medicine supports Council Member Chin’s bill because it is aligned with Age-friendly NYC’s priority to maintain affordable housing and it employs a key Age-friendly strategy to work within the existing lease renewal process,” **said Lindsay Goldman, Project Director of Age-Friendly NYC for the New York Academy of Medicine.** “This legislation has the potential to help older people remain in their homes while continuing to meet their other needs. Older people are often some of the most long-term civically engaged tenants; they possess invaluable knowledge of their neighborhoods and spend money locally. The NYC Rent Freeze Program benefits not just older tenants, but their buildings and surrounding communities as well. It is in our city’s best interest to ensure all of those who are eligible become aware of this vital resource.”