



**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES
SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGING**

NOTICE OF JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

SUBJECT: Joint Public Hearing on Rental Assistance

PURPOSE: To examine the need for New York to increase availability of residential rental assistance to prevent evictions, homelessness, housing instability, and excessive rent burdens through the proposed Housing Access Voucher Program, the Shelter Arrears Eviction Foreclosure Program, the Senior Citizen and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE and DRIE) programs, and other initiatives.

**Tuesday, February 18, 2025
10:00 AM
Hearing Room
250 Broadway, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007**

ORAL TESTIMONY BY INVITATION ONLY

New York is in a homelessness, eviction, and housing affordability crisis. According to a January 2025 Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) report, there were 158,019 homeless New Yorkers as of January 2024, a figure that had more than doubled since January 2022. In addition, many of those who have a home are struggling to afford it. The same OSC report found that 2.9 million households, 38% of all New York households, were cost-burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income towards housing expenses, while approximately 20 percent of households pay more than half of their income towards housing expenses. There were 191,230 eviction filings in 2024, according to OSC's analysis of Office of Court Administration data.

The state can take immediate steps to help families maintain stable, affordable housing and prevent evictions through the provision of rental assistance.

Rental Assistance via Vouchers

In previous budget years, both houses of the Legislature have supported the establishment of state-funded rental assistance through the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) in their one-house budget resolutions. Programs such as HAVP would provide ongoing rental assistance to households at risk of homelessness and to transition households currently in shelters into permanent housing.

Emergency Rental Assistance for Rent Arrears

Through the FY 2024-2025 budget, the state allocated \$10 million for the Shelter Arrears Eviction Foreclosure (SAEF) Program. The Senate had supported a broader proposed program to be funded at \$50 million. Under SAEF, additional emergency rental assistance is being provided to cover rent arrears and prevent eviction in counties across the state other than those in New York City. The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) launched the program in October 2024. No new funding has been proposed for SAEF in the Executive Budget for FY 2025-2026.

Rent Freeze Programs

The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) programs provide rental assistance for eligible New Yorkers living in rent-regulated housing by freezing the rent paid by a household at the time of enrollment and compensating their landlord with property tax rebates for the difference between the amount the household pays and the maximum legal rent. Currently, New York City and 21 cities, towns, and villages in Nassau and Westchester counties have adopted SCRIE/DRIE. While these programs shield participants from future rent increases, renters only become eligible when they are already rent-burdened, with many paying more than one third of their income toward rent. Many participants pay 40 percent or more, and the SCRIE/DRIE maximum income limit has not been increased since 2014. Had it been indexed to inflation, the \$50,000 maximum from 2014 would now be roughly \$67,000.

This hearing seeks to solicit comments on establishing a state-funded rental assistance program in the form of HAVP; to understand how SAEF is working and consider the benefits of expanding the program; and to examine proposed reforms to SCRIE and DRIE to give localities the discretion to make them more effective at reducing excessive rent burdens and providing housing stability. The following items will be considered:

- S72 (Kavanagh) -- Establishes the Housing Access Voucher Program
- S4446 (Kavanagh, Ryan S.) -- Enacts the Shelter Arrears Eviction Foreclosure Act to provide emergency assistance for rent arrears for the prevention of eviction.
- Implementation of the SAEF program to date.
- The effectiveness of other rental assistance programs, in New York and in other jurisdictions, including the federal Section 8 program.
- S561 (Krueger) -- Relates to notice regarding the rent increase exemption for low-income elderly persons and persons with disabilities programs
- S1457A (Kavanagh) -- Provides for adjustment of the maximum income threshold for eligibility for SCRIE, DRIE, SCHE and DHE by any increase in the consumer price index
- S2451A (Kavanagh) -- Permits localities to opt to reduce renters' payments toward rent to one-third of household income for SCRIE/DRIE
- S2534 (Sanders) -- Sets SCRIE/DRIE rent to the original date of eligibility with an eligible look-back period of up to two years
- S3563 (Cleare) -- Includes the parent or guardian of a person with a disability in the definition of head of household for the disability rent increase program.
- S4252 (Parker) -- Provides for a continuation of senior citizen rent increase exemption benefits after a period of ineligibility

Persons wishing to present pertinent testimony to the Committees at the hearing should complete and return the enclosed reply form as soon as possible. It is important that the reply form be fully completed and returned so that persons may be notified in the event of emergency postponement or cancellation.

Oral testimony will be limited to five minutes duration. Ten copies of any prepared testimony should be submitted at the hearing registration desk. The Committees would appreciate advance receipt of prepared statements.

Attendees and participants at any legislative public hearing should be aware that these proceedings are video recorded. Their likenesses may be included in any video coverage shown on television or the internet.

In order to meet the needs of those who may have a disability, the Aging, Housing, and Social Services Committees, in accordance with their policy of non-discrimination on the basis of disability, as well as the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), have made their facilities and services available to all individuals with disabilities. For individuals with disabilities, accommodations will be provided, upon reasonable request, to afford such individuals access and admission to State Legislature facilities and activities.

Cordell Cleare
Chair, Committee on Aging

Brian Kavanagh
Chair, Committee on Housing,
Construction and Community
Development

Roxanne J. Persaud
Chair, Committee on Social
Services

PUBLIC HEARING REPLY FORM

Persons wishing to present testimony at the public hearing on rental assistance are requested to complete this reply form as soon as possible: by February 10, 2025 for those seeking to testify in person, and by February 14, 2025 for those seeking to submit written testimony. Please return this form by mail or email to:

Hally Chu
Housing Committee Director
Senate Standing Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development
250 Broadway, Room 2011, New York, NY 10007
Email: chu@nysenate.gov
Phone: 212-298-5565

Oral Testimony by Invitation Only

- I plan to attend the public hearing on rental assistance to be conducted by the Aging, Housing, and Social Services Committees on February 18, 2025.
- I plan to make a public statement at the above hearing. My statement will be limited to 10 minutes, and I will answer any questions which may arise. I will provide 10 copies of my prepared statement.
- I will address my remarks to the following subjects:

- I do not plan to attend the above hearing.
- I would like to be added to the Committees' mailing lists for notices and reports.
- I would like to be removed from the Committees' mailing lists.
- I will require assistance and/or handicapped accessibility information.

Please specify the type of assistance required:

NAME:

TITLE:

ORGANIZATION:

ADDRESS:

E-MAIL:

TELEPHONE / FAX: