



City Council Committee on Aging

Jointly with the Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disability, Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Disability Services, and the Committee on Finance Hearing on Intro 1309

New York City Department of Finance

Testimony of Michael Hyman, First Deputy Commissioner

January 12th, 2017

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Chin, Chairman Cohen, and Chairwoman Ferreras-Copeland and members of the Committees on Aging; Mental Health, Developmental Disability, Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, Disability Services; and Committee on Finance. I am Michael Hyman, First Deputy Commissioner at the New York City Department of Finance (DOF). I am joined by Samara Karasyk, Assistant Commissioner for External Affairs and Julie Walpert, Assistant Commissioner for Housing Supervision for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Intro 1309, legislation authorizing the City to extend to 2020 the increase in the amount of income a household can receive from \$29,000 to \$50,000—and still be eligible for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE)—the Rent Freeze Program. We support its enactment and are committed to making sure that every eligible New Yorker knows about the program and receives this important benefit.

From July 1, 2014 to the present, 15,779 new seniors enrolled in SCRIE. During that same period, HPD enrolled 1821 new participants in SCRIE. Thus, in total, 17,600 new households enrolled. City outreach efforts, as well as the new income ceiling, contributed to the enrollment increases. Currently, there are approximately 60,400 seniors in the Rent Freeze program (53,688-DOF; 6,721-HPD) and 10,613 people with disabilities enrolled in the program. Please see chart below for breakdown of total enrollment for those who met the new income ceiling:

DOF—CURRENT RENT FREEZE NUMBERS

SCRIE	
Total Current Active Participants	53,688
Current Active Participants > \$29K	7,553
DRIE	
Total Current Active Participants	11,146
Total Current Active Participants > \$29K	600

HPD CURRENT ENROLLEES

Total Current Active Participants	6,721
Total Active Participants >\$29K	481

For the past year, the DOF has amplified its outreach through partnerships with elected officials, community boards, and community-based organizations to raise awareness about these programs so that more people may enroll. We have taken a strategic approach to outreach, focused on the neighborhoods where we have the highest levels of under enrollment. We feel that this method of outreach will yield a continued increase in enrollment numbers for these vital programs. We have also made a number of improvements to the application process, including a complete renovation of our NYC Rent Freeze Walk-In Center and totally redesigned applications.

We wholeheartedly support the enactment of Intro 1309 to ensure the income limits set forth in Local Law 19 of 2014 are extended to June 30th, 2020. DOF projects a savings to eligible recipients for the Rent Freeze in FY'17 of \$14 million and for FY '18, \$17 million.

We are harnessing every tool that we have to increase enrollment and retain current program participants. We know there is more work to do, and are pleased to be partnering with so many advocates for seniors and people to make sure that all qualified households take advantage of this vital benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We are happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.