



Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal to the New York City Council Committees on Disabilities, Aging and Finance regarding SCRIE and DRIE

September 18, 2026

Good afternoon, Chairs Zhuang, Hanif, and Lee, and members of the Committees on Aging, Disabilities, and Finance. I am Manhattan Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal, elected to represent 1.6 million Manhattanites, including the largest share of SCRIE and DRIE recipients of any borough in the city.¹

I am grateful to the City Council for convening this critical hearing, and to the tenants, advocates, and my state and city colleagues, who join me in support of Councilmember Farah Louis's legislation, Intro. 978. As you well know, we are facing an affordability crisis in our city, one which particularly impacts our most vulnerable neighbors. In Manhattan, rents are rising at nearly double the rate of inflation, with the average rent reaching a staggering \$6,650 in August, 2026.²

New York has a proven tool to ensure seniors and people with disabilities do not get priced out of their homes: the rent freeze program, known as SCRIE and DRIE. Through the program, tenants are afforded rental stability and property owners are reimbursed through property-tax abatement credits. And, our city avoids the enormous human and financial costs of displacement.

But the household income limit to qualify for the program has been frozen at \$50K since 2014.³ This is tied for the longest freeze in the program's history. In the years since 2014, inflation in this region rose nearly 39%. Shelter costs rose over 46%. And Social Security's federally mandated cost-of-living adjustments reached almost 38%.⁴ This means that simply receiving inflation-adjusted Social Security could push a New Yorker above the \$50,000 cap and effectively strip away their rent protection, despite not enabling them to actually afford rent.

¹ [New York City Department of Finance, 2025 Report on the New York City Rent Freeze Program \(New York: NYC Department of Finance, June 2025\), 6, Table 2.](#)

² [Laura Ratliff, "Average Manhattan Rents Are Nearing \\$7,000 a Month, the Highest in NYC History," Time Out New York, August 13, 2026.](#)

³ New York City Council, Committees on Aging, Disabilities, and Finance, Committee Report of the Legislative and Finance Divisions: Oversight – Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) (New York: New York City Council, September 18, 2026).

⁴ NYC Council, *Committee Report*.

This has had a terrible impact on the service we are providing to a vulnerable population. Year after year, seniors are priced out of SCRIE and DRIE as their income and costs rise with inflation. Many who desperately need relief are now not eligible at all.

Thankfully, in this year's budget, the State authorized the first increase to this cap in twelve years, raising the maximum income limit to \$75,000.⁵ This represents a 50% increase, and aligns closely with shelter-cost inflation since 2014. The legislature also added new notice requirements, aimed at closing the program's awareness gap. But because this authorization is a local option, New York City must opt into it. Intro. 978, sponsored by Council Member Louis, would do exactly that, extending this essential protection to more seniors and New Yorkers with disabilities.

But our work is not yet finished. The state must still act to index this threshold to inflation going forward, through legislation like S.1457A/A.5344 (Kavanagh/Glick), of which I was a proud cosponsor, so that New Yorkers do not have to wait another twelve years to be able to afford their rent.⁶

The enrollment process for SCRIE and DRIE is itself prohibitively complicated. My constituent services team helps hundreds of New Yorkers navigate the application process. I hear again and again from my team and my constituents how overly complex and burdensome it is. And that is only for people who know the program exists. Currently, an estimated 158k households are eligible for the program, yet only 67k are enrolled.⁷

Council Member Caban's Reso 55-A in support of S.2220/A.5232 is an important step in making enrollment easier – Albany must pass legislation to allow NYC to create an automatic enrollment program. Intro 307 by Council Member Marte would also ease the application process by creating a single universal application that HPD and DOF would jointly administer.

Solving our housing crisis requires bold, wide-ranging action. That means building and preserving affordable housing, strengthening rental assistance, organizing and empowering tenants, and improving successful programs like SCRIE and DRIE so they work to keep more New Yorkers housed.

Thank you to Council Member Louis for sponsoring Intro. 978, to State Senator Brian Kavanagh, Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal, and the many other legislative partners I was proud to stand with in Albany, and to the advocates and tenants whose work helped secure this long-overdue state authorization. I urge the Council to pass the bills before you today and deliver the rent protection New Yorkers deserve. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

⁵ [New York State Senate, "State Senate Passes 2026–27 Budget," press release, May 28, 2026.](#)

⁶ [S. 1457, 2025–2026 Leg., Reg. Sess. \(N.Y. 2025\).](#)

⁷ NYC Council, *Committee Report*.