

Mayor de Blasio Announces New Rent Freeze Team for Public Engagement Unit

June 21, 2017

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio announced during a town hall today, alongside Council Member Margaret Chin, a dedicated team of 10 specialists within the Public Engagement Unit to proactively support the NYC Rent Freeze and Homeowner Tax Exemption Programs across the five boroughs. PEU’s new Rent Freeze Team will conduct door to door outreach and make phone calls to eligible New Yorkers, using case management techniques to help them navigate the application process.

In partnership with the Department of Finance, the Department for the Aging and the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, the goal is to enroll 10,000 New Yorkers this year into rent freeze and tax benefit programs for seniors and people with disabilities. Last year, 5,800 households were enrolled into the Rent Freeze Program. The Rent Freeze Program, also known as the Senior Citizen and Disability Rent Increase Exemption Programs (SCRIE and DRIE), provide tax credits to landlords that effectively freeze rent for low-income seniors and people with disabilities living in rent-regulated apartments. The Senior Citizen Homeowners (SCHE) and Disabled Homeowners Exemptions (DHE) provide property tax reductions for senior and disabled homeowners.

“Too many New Yorkers living on fixed incomes are feeling the burden of rising costs in our city,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “But we are fighting every day to make sure they can live, thrive and retire in place. The Public Engagement Unit’s new Rent Freeze Team will provide valuable guidance and information about these programs to renters and homeowners. New York City must remain a place for everyone, or it won’t be a place for anyone.”

“As the Public Engagement Unit knocks thousands doors across the City, we constantly meet New Yorkers who are able to live where they love because of these programs,” said **Regina Schwartz, Director of the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit**. “We are proud to partner with city agencies across the administration to increase our outreach to

vulnerable New Yorkers, build new relationship with elected officials, community partners and connect individuals to government.”

New Yorkers participating in SCRIE save an average of \$235 in rent per month and in DRIE an average of \$135 per month over the lifetime of the benefit.

“We are excited that the Mayor is providing additional resources to help enroll as many eligible seniors and persons with disabilities as possible,” said **Finance Commissioner Jacques Jiha**. “The renters and homeowners exemption programs offer significant relief for many New Yorkers who would be struggling to stay in their homes if not for this benefit. We look forward to introducing many more people to opportunity to take advantage of the City’s money-saving programs.”

“Obtaining affordable housing remains among the greatest need in New York City, especially for older adults with limited incomes,” said **Department for the Aging Commissioner Donna Corrado**. “By proactively promoting the Homeowner Tax Exemption and Freeze Your Rent programs, the City is reaffirming its commitment to helping seniors age in place in their communities.”

“One of the most important aspects to leading a happy, healthy and productive life is the security of having a roof over your head,” said **Mayor’s Office of People with Disabilities Commissioner Victor Calise**. “Creating a dedicated unit to conduct outreach to New Yorkers eligible for NYC Rent Freeze and Homeowner Tax Exemption Programs will help thousands of individuals with disabilities stay in their homes by saving on future increases.”

PEU’s Rent Freeze Team will be helping constituents in Council Member Chin’s district every other Wednesday starting June 28 from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in her district office.

"For those New Yorkers who qualify for the NYC Rent Freeze program, especially seniors and those with disabilities, we need to ensure that they have the adequate tools and information to guide them through the process,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin**. “I am so excited to work with the PEU’s Rent Freeze Team starting June 28th, and make good on our commitment to keep these vulnerable New Yorkers in their homes. I thank Mayor de Blasio for his dedication to making our City a more affordable place for all.”

"The New York City Council and the Department of Finance have worked collaboratively and creatively to increase outreach and the number of seniors that benefit from the Rent Freeze Program," said **Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland**. "Council Member Margaret Chin has been a steadfast advocate for our aging community and this year made great progress with historical investments to DFTA in the City's budget. Any measure we take to increase enrollment and help keep New Yorkers in their homes is welcome. I applaud Mayor de Blasio for moving steadily towards his housing goals and we look forward to our continued partnership with DOF."

"Each year, New York City rent gets higher and higher and it's more difficult for some of our city's most vulnerable to make ends meet," said **Council Member Andrew Cohen**. "I applaud the creation of a team of specialists dedicated to helping New Yorkers fully take advantage of the programs available to them."

Bobbie Sackman, Director of Public Policy, LiveOn NY said, "LiveOn NY is pleased to work with Mayor de Blasio and his Public Engagement Unit ensure that 10,000 additional New Yorkers will be enrolled in the SCRIE/DRIE and SCHE/DHE programs. Councilwoman Margaret Chin has also been a great champion of the SCRIE/DRIE program. LiveOn NY's robust SCRIE enrollment program has helped thousands of older New Yorkers to continue to afford their homes and remain in their communities. We look forward to working with our city partners to maximize the utilization of SCRIE and these other programs."

"AARP is thrilled that the mayor is dedicating staff and resources to enroll older New Yorkers in the NYC Rent Freeze Program," said **Chris Widelo, Associate State Director of AARP New York**. "This program is key to ensuring older residents can afford their apartments as rents increase across the city - and this assistance will deliver real help to more tenants struggling to make ends meet."

"The Chinese-American Planning Council would like to thank Mayor de Blasio and Council Member Chin for bringing more services to the Chinatown and Lower East Side community," said **Wayne Ho, President and CEO of the Chinese-American Planning Council**. "SCRIE and DRIE are programs which our community members ask about, so having culturally and linguistically appropriate staff to help community members through this process is important. CPC looks forward to expanding similar services in Brooklyn."

“I’d like to commend Mayor de Blasio and the City’s Public Engagement Unit for their concerted efforts to enroll eligible New Yorkers in SCRIE and DRIE. These programs are a lifeline for some of our most vulnerable neighbors, and are key to making New York a better place to age. I’d also like to thank Council Member Margaret Chin for her continuous advocacy on behalf of older adults in our City. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City on outreach efforts for these programs,” said **Sandy Myers, Director of Government and External Relations at Selfhelp Community Services.**

“The Asian American Federation applauds Mayor de Blasio for taking a proactive approach to supporting low-income tenants across our City. Affordable housing remains one of the most important priorities for our community, where one-half of our seniors live in rent-burdened households. In our own report, seniors requested more access to safety net programs like SCRIE to help them maintain their independence and fight displacement from neighborhoods where they built community for decades. The Mayor’s efforts will provide vital assistance to our pan-Asian American elders, who are the fastest growing and the poorest senior population. We thank Councilmember Chin for her unyielding commitment to senior services, and fighting for our elders’ dignity,” said **Jo-Ann Yoo, Executive Director of the Asian American Federation.**

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