

## **AGENCIES LAUNCH WEEK OF ACTION TO ENROLL OLDER NEW YORKERS AND THOSE WITH DISABILITIES INTO PROGRAMS TO REDUCE HOUSING COSTS**

*Outreach will help older adults and people with disabilities enroll into programs that will freeze their rent or receive property tax breaks*

*One-on-one support will be available at older adult centers located in underserved communities during week of action*

NEW YORK—The Mayor’s Office of Public Engagement (PEU), Department of Finance (DOF), and Department for the Aging (NYC Aging) have launched a week of action as part of an ongoing outreach strategy to connect city residents to NYC rent freeze and homeowner tax exemption programs.

New Yorkers who are 62 years or older or have a disability may qualify to freeze their rent. Homeowner tax exemption season is also here. New Yorkers who are 65 years or older or have a disability may qualify for a tax exemption if they own a home.

There are currently thousands of New Yorkers who qualify for these money-saving programs but are not enrolled. Largely due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 saw a decrease in rent freeze program enrollments. Additionally, the deadline to apply or renew for many homeowner tax exemptions is coming up on March 15, including the Senior Citizen Homeowners’ Exemption (SCHE), the Disabled Homeowners’ Exemption (DHE), and several others found [here](#). As part of this effort to increase enrollments, staff from PEU and DOF will be in older adult centers located in underserved communities providing one-on-one support (see full list below), as well as conducting targeted phone outreach to alert New Yorkers of these benefits.

To kick off the week of action, PEU, DOF, and NYC Aging held a press conference today at YM & YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood “Center for Adults Living Well @ the Y” at 54 Nagle Ave. The press conference highlighted the importance of enrolling in both rent freeze and homeowner tax exemption programs as soon as possible. Staff from PEU, DOF, and NYC Aging were onsite canvassing with information about the programs and helping people enroll. Speakers at the press conference included the Department for the Aging Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Mayor’s Office of Public Engagement Executive Director Adrienne Lever, Department of Finance Taxpayer Advocate Robin Lee, Center for Adults Living Well @ the Y Director Dee Hernandez, and Mayor’s Office of Public Engagement Rent Freeze Specialist Shaquanna Parnell.

The earlier New Yorkers enroll in these programs, the more money they can save. The City has many resources available to help New York’s renters and owners with this process, including helplines and in-person opportunities.

Eligible New Yorkers can get free, one-on-one support to enroll in NYC's rent freeze and homeowner tax exemption programs in the following ways:

- Call 929-252-7242 to connect with the NYC Public Engagement Unit's Hotline.
- Call 311 and say "Rent Freeze" to connect with the Department of Finance.
- Call NYC Aging Connect at 212-AGING-NY (212-244-6469) or go to one of the 300+ NYC Aging affiliated older adult centers. [Find a center near you.](#)

"The Department of Finance offers a number of financial benefits for eligible New Yorkers in the form of tax exemptions, abatements, and money-saving programs to help renters and property owners save on their taxes, pay less in rent, and continue to live in their homes," said **DOF Commissioner Preston Niblack**. "Enrolling New Yorkers in these cost-saving programs is crucial to our mission at DOF, and that is why we are happy to partner with PEU and DFTA on this interagency outreach initiative to connect more New Yorkers – especially our most vulnerable neighbors – to programs like Rent Freeze as well as a host of property tax exemptions for homeowners, such as the Senior Citizen Homeowners' Exemption (SCHE) and the Disabled Homeowners' Exemption (DHE). We encourage New Yorkers to join us this holiday season and learn more about how these different benefits could help them save year-round."

"Affordable housing is critical in helping older adults age in their communities, amongst friends and family. Rent Freeze programs like SCRIE and DRIE help eligible New Yorkers stay in their homes and avoid being displaced by rent increases they can't afford. Lamentably, many people who qualify for these programs don't enroll," said **Department for the Aging Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez**. "The city is here to help ensure everyone who is eligible applies. There are over 300 older adult centers across the city, where older New Yorkers can get guidance and support in the Rent Freeze application process. Visit your local center and enroll today."

"The Mayor's Office of Public Engagement (PEU) is thrilled to be working closely with NYC Aging and DOF to connect more New Yorkers to programs like Rent Freeze and to property tax breaks that can help them stay in their homes," said **PEU Executive Director Adrienne Lever**. "City, State, and Federal benefits like these are lifelines for so many of our neighbors, but far too few eligible New Yorkers know that they qualify. It's our responsibility to do everything we can to provide hands-on support to the most vulnerable in our community, and ensure that they don't spend their holidays worried about losing the roof over their heads."

"Across our community, city, and nation we are facing a housing crisis. While we need to work on many fronts to address this crisis, there are existing government programs that are effective in preserving and expanding affordable housing for New Yorkers," said **Councilmember Carmen de la Rosa**. "I commend the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit, Department for the Aging, and Department of Finance for organizing this week of action to raise awareness of several programs that prevent displacement and freeze rents for our seniors and disability community. Everyone deserves affordable and healthy housing and we cannot stop until we achieve housing justice for all."

As part of the week of action, the Mayor's Office of Public Engagement will do targeted text outreach to thousands of older New Yorkers to let them know about rent freeze and homeowner tax exemptions. PEU's Rent Freeze team will screen New Yorkers for eligibility, provide information about the programs and schedule follow-ups for in-person and phone assistance for submission of applications and documents at older adult centers.

PEU and DOF staff will also be in-person at the below older adult centers to continue to support residents following the week of action to provide support to older New Yorkers in applying for the rent freeze and property tax break programs:

- December 20, 10:30-3:30: Arturo Schomburg Older Adult Center, 1315 Franklin Ave, Bronx 10456
- December 21, 10:30-3:30: JASA Starret City Older Adult Center, 1540 Van Sicken Avenue, Brooklyn 11239
- December 27, 10:30-3:30: Leon Older Adult Center, 735 East 152nd Street, Bronx 10455
- December 29, 10:30-3:30: Rosetta Gaston Older Adult Center, 460 Dumont Avenue, Brooklyn 11212
- January 3, 10:30-3:30: Arturo Schomburg Older Adult Center, 1315 Franklin Ave, Bronx 10456
- January 5, 10:30-3:30: JASA Brookdale Village Older Adult Center, 131 Beach 19th Street, Queens 11691
- January 10, 10:30-3:30: Center for Adults Living Well @ the Y, 54 Nagle Ave, New York, 10040
- January 12, 10:30-3:30: RAIN Eastchester Older Adult Center, 1246 Burke Avenue, Bronx 10469
- January 17, 10:30-3:30: Stuyvesant Heights NSC, 574 Madison St, Brooklyn, 11221
- January 19, 10:30-3:30: JASA Brookdale Village Older Adult Center, 131 Beach 19th Street, Queens 11691
- January 24, 10:30-3:30: Carver Older Adult Center, 55 East 102nd Street, Harlem 10029
- January 26, 10:30-3:30: JASA Starret City Older Adult Center, 1540 Van Sicken Avenue, Brooklyn 11239

The NYC Department of Finance (DOF) recently released their [2022 Annual Rent Freeze Report](#). The NYC Rent Freeze Program, which includes the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) Program and the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) Program, helps those eligible stay in affordable housing by freezing their rent, potentially saving them hundreds of dollars a month as long as they remain in the program. The longer the individual remains in the program, the higher their benefits will be over time, due to increases in what the landlord could legally charge per the NYC Rent Guidelines Board. This makes renewing rent freeze benefits crucial to the success of the program and ensure New Yorkers receive their maximum possible benefit.

Per the 2022 Rent Freeze Report, on average, SCRIE and DRIE recipients who have been enrolled in the Rent Freeze Program for five to ten years save between \$176 and \$191 a month respectively. For recipients in the program for ten to fifteen years, that benefit increases to an average of \$307 for SCRIE recipients and \$340 a month for DRIE recipients.

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### **About the Rent Freeze Program**

Eligible New Yorkers with disabilities or over age 62 can stop their regulated rent from increasing with New York City's Rent Freeze program. There are two types of Rent Freeze benefits provided by the City: Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) for New Yorkers over age 62 and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) for disabled New Yorkers over 18. If you have an annual household income of \$50,000 or less, pay more than 1/3 of your income on rent, and live in a rent regulated apartment, you may qualify for rent freeze. New Yorkers have a few requirements to meet in order to be eligible, and you can [use this online tool to check your eligibility](#). To get free, one-on-one assistance with signing up for Rent Freeze, New Yorkers can call PEU's Hotline at 929-252-7242.

### **About Homeowner Tax Exemptions**

There are property tax breaks available for New Yorkers with disabilities or over age 65! If you have an annual household income of \$58,399 or less, you may be eligible for NYC property tax breaks. To get free, one-on-one assistance with signing up, New Yorkers can call PEU's Hotline at 929-252-7242.

The Department of Finance also administers a number of benefits for property owners in the form of exemptions and abatements. A full list of DOF's benefits for property owners can be found here: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/finance/benefits/landlords.page>.

### **About the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit**

The NYC Public Engagement Unit (PEU) was created to develop a new model for government outreach, using community organizing principles to re-envision how the City provides services to its most vulnerable communities. Rather than expecting constituents to navigate a complex City bureaucracy to get the help they need, PEU adopts grassroots tactics to meet residents where they are — at their doors and on their phones, in their social media feeds and in their communities. PEU combines this proactive outreach with comprehensive case management, and in doing so, combats disillusionment and builds long-term relationships between New Yorkers and their government.

For more information about PEU, visit [nyc.gov/PEU](https://www.nyc.gov/PEU) and stay connected on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MayorsPEU> or Twitter at @MayorsPEU.

### **About the Department of Finance**

The Department of Finance (DOF) is the central nervous system of New York City government. We collect the revenues that make every city service possible. Public education, police and fire protection, hospitals and healthcare facilities, parks and recreation centers—it all starts with DOF. If you own a home, drive a car, rent an apartment, or start a business, you will interact with the Department of Finance at some point. We are your partner in city government, here to help you save money when you can and pay it when you must.

For more information about DOF, visit [nyc.gov/finance](https://nyc.gov/finance)

### **About the Department for the Aging**

The Department for the Aging's mission is to work to eliminate ageism and ensure the dignity and quality-of-life of New York City's diverse older adults and for the support of their caregivers through service, advocacy, and education.

There are more than 300 older adult centers (OACs) and affiliated sites throughout the five boroughs that provide healthy meals, fun activities, classes, fitness programs and social services. Older adult center membership is free and open to all New Yorkers, ages 60 and older. Both in-person and virtual activities are designed to meet the needs of members. [Find a center near you.](#)

For more information about the Department for the Aging, visit [nyc.gov/aging](https://nyc.gov/aging).