



## **TESTIMONY OPPOSING THE HRA CITYFHEPS UNIT INCENTIVE PAYMENT DISCONTINUANCE**

City Fiscal Year 2026

New York City Rules  
Public Hearing

November 5, 2025

Good morning and thank you to the members of the HRA Rules Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Valerie Barton-Richardson, and I am the President and CEO of CAMBA, Inc., a non-profit community-based organization that provides services that connect people with opportunities to enhance their quality of life. Every day, our staff directly supports homeless New Yorkers to access and move into safe affordable homes.

We have seen firsthand how the CityFHEPS rental assistance program can be a life-changing tool to help families move out of shelter and into permanent housing. But we also know how complex and slow the process can be. Every step, from securing a shopping letter to final lease approval and payment, involves extensive paperwork, multiple agency reviews, and frequent delays that can stretch for weeks or even months.

These delays have real consequences. Landlords often walk away during the waiting period, unwilling to keep a unit vacant while the CityFHEPS process plays out. The **Unit Hold incentive** was created to solve this very problem. By offering landlords the equivalent of one month's rent to hold the unit while the paperwork and inspections are completed, the City has helped keep thousands of apartments available for individuals and families using vouchers. It was a smart, cost-effective way to ensure that when a voucher household finally finds an apartment, they do not lose it because of City bureaucracy.

The elimination of the unit hold incentive represents a false economy that will impose substantially greater costs on the City while prolonging shelter stays of homeless individuals and families. According to DSS data, this modest investment has proven remarkably effective, helping 22,000 people transition out of shelter using CityFHEPS in FY 2024 alone. By removing this critical tool, the City will force vulnerable families to remain in shelter for additional months at costs that far exceed a single month's rent payment to landlords. We know that extended shelter stays will dramatically increase overall DHS budget pressures, ultimately costing taxpayers far more than the savings generated by eliminating unit hold incentives. Moreover, this decision ignores the rental market realities that landlords require meaningful incentives to accept vouchers given the significant processing delays inherent in the system. The system is being evaluated and is changing for efficiency, but it takes time to implement the changes. In essence, the City is abandoning a small, strategic investment that yields significant returns in moving families from expensive temporary placements into permanent housing precisely when such tools are needed most. Eliminating the Unit Hold incentive would reverse this progress. Without it, landlords have little reason to wait through long administrative delays, and many will once again refuse to rent to CityFHEPS tenants. That means more families will wait, even when they have a rental subsidy in hand.

We have already heard from landlords who say they will not participate in the CityFHEPS program if this incentive disappears. Our own staff anticipate a significant

drop in successful placements, especially for larger families and those seeking apartments in competitive rental markets.

In short, removing the Unit Hold incentive undermines the very goal of CityFHEPS: helping New Yorkers move quickly and sustainably into permanent housing. We urge the Administration to **reinstate the Unit Hold incentive** and to continue working with providers, advocates, and landlords to streamline the CityFHEPS process overall—so that this vital program can fulfill its promise of moving people from homelessness to permanent stable housing in New York City.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to supporting New Yorkers in need of a stable home.