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Thank you to the members of the HRA Rules Committee for the opportunity to provide comments.

My name is Eustacia Smith and I am the Director of Advocacy at West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing, which develops and operates low-income supportive housing for older adults and operates a shelter, providing 110 shelter beds to seniors.

Every day, our staff directly assists our shelter residents with accessing safe and affordable permanent housing. The CityFHEPS rental assistance program has been a life-changing tool in helping our seniors move out of the 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. Unfortunately, many people who find an apartment, then end up losing it before they are able to move in, because the process takes so long and the landlord moves on to someone else who can pay right away.

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.

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 of our seniors will remain stuck in the shelter, even when they have a rental subsidy in hand. This is the wrong direction to go at a time when available housing in NYC is at an all-time low and the number of homeless older adults has skyrocketed.

We need to help our seniors who have become homeless to move quickly 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 ending homelessness in New York City.

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