

Testimony Opposing the Elimination of the CityFHEPS Unit Hold Incentive

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

My name is Shiniqua Bryan, and I am a member of Neighbors Together, a community-based organization committed to ending hunger and poverty, and works with New Yorkers using housing vouchers to advocate for policies that will end source of income (SOI) discrimination and make vouchers effective tools for accessing housing.

I have firsthand experience with how the CityFHEPS rental assistance program can be a life-changing tool—helping families move out of shelters and unsafe housing into permanent housing. However, it is also essential to know how complex and slow the process can be. Every step, from securing a shopping letter to obtaining final lease approval and processing payment. This process involves extensive paperwork, multiple agency reviews, and frequent delays that can stretch for weeks or even months. With my experience, I had the courage to share my experience on the news, and a landlord reached out to me, willing to rent to me, and was patient because of the unit hold incentive. This process took seven months, during which the program continued to make rental payments to both my former neglectful landlord and my new landlord.

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 designed to address this very issue. 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 due to bureaucratic delays in the city.

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 individuals and families—many of them with children will remain stuck in shelters, even when they have a rental subsidy in hand. During my housing search, landlords preferred to participate in the CityFHEPS program because of the incentive. If this incentive were to disappear, there would be no hope of finding a permanent home through this program.

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 continue working with providers, advocates, and landlords to streamline the CityFHEPS process, so that this vital program can fulfill its promise to end homelessness in New York City.

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

Sincerely,

Shinique Bryan
