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**SENATOR SAVINO, ASSEMBLY MEMBER KAVANAGH, COUNCIL
MEMBER ROSENTHAL ANNOUNCE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION TO
MAKE 1,000 ADDITIONAL NEW YORKERS WITH DISABILITIES ELIGIBLE
FOR RENT FREEZE.**

Raises Income Limitation from \$20,000 Up To \$50,000

ALBANY --Today, Senator Diane Savino, Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, Council Member Helen Rosenthal, New Yorkers with disabilities, legislative colleagues, and disability rights and housing advocates announced enactment of legislation to expand the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) program.

Governor Andrew Cuomo signed State legislation sponsored by Savino and Kavanagh on Tuesday that will increase the maximum income limitation for the program, making about 1,000 additional households in New York City eligible to have their rent frozen. The City Council is expected to approve the new provision at its Stated Meeting later today, and the de Blasio administration has already indicated that the City will implement it. The expanded benefit will also be available in other localities that choose to adopt it.

The DRIE program freezes rents for people with disabilities living in rent-regulated housing with low incomes who pay one-third or more of their income in rent. Landlords are compensated for the difference between the full rent and the frozen amount through

property tax abatements. Currently a single person living alone is disqualified if his or her income exceeds \$20,412; for households of two or more residents, the limit is \$29,484. The new law raises the annual income limit for all tenants with disabilities to \$50,000 per household.

Senator Diane Savino, the Senate sponsor of the bill, said, “This year we succeeded in raising the income eligibility level for senior citizens in the SCRIE program from \$29,000 to \$50,000, something desperately needed. Now with this increase to DRIE, championed by the Independent Democratic Conference, we extend further assistance to the vulnerable population of disabled New Yorkers. DRIE expansion will help to prevent homelessness and can avert institutionalization. This bill also honors our disabled veterans who were not formerly eligible for DRIE, with a chance to improve their standard of living.”

Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, who authored the bill in the Assembly, said, “As the cost of housing and other necessities rises faster than the incomes of New Yorkers, it is becoming more and more difficult for people to make ends meet. Today we take a big step to reverse that trend for residents of our communities who are often the most vulnerable to being displaced. People with disabilities and modest incomes, particularly disabled veterans whose military benefits alone may make them ineligible for the existing rent exemption program, will no longer have to fear losing their houses. I thank Governor Andrew Cuomo for acting so quickly to review and sign the bill, our Senate sponsor Senator Diane Savino, and all our colleagues in the legislature and advocates who have worked to expand this program for a long time. Our communities will be better, fairer, and more stable because we worked together to get this done.”

Council Member Helen Rosenthal, who authored the bill in the City Council, said, “The DRIE program is a critical tool in the City's affordable housing arsenal. DRIE supports vulnerable tenants struggling to pay escalating rents while living on restricted incomes. Raising the income eligibility cap is a common sense move to provide a safety net for those New Yorkers most in need. This bill will also address the eligibility disparity between the DRIE and SCRIE programs, an unconscionable discrepancy that this Council is acting swiftly to correct.”

Senate Co-Leader Jeffrey D. Klein said, “Expanding the Disability Rent Increase Exemption program was a top legislative priority of the Independent Democratic Conference and something I fought for during the budget process in Albany this year. I am very pleased that we were able to get it done. This increase in eligibility will freeze

rents for hundreds more disabled New Yorkers and ensure that one of our most vulnerable populations have affordable places to call home for many years to come.”

“This law will enable us to stay in our home,” said **Debra Greif, a resident of Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn, whose income has excluded her from benefitting from DRIE in the past but now expects to qualify.** “It would have been nearly impossible for us to move. Knowing that I can stay in my neighborhood, won’t lose my apartment, and can stay near my doctor is wonderful. This is a huge relief to our family, allowing us to make ends meet.”

Councilmember Andrew Cohen, said, “As Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Disability Services, I am proud to work with my colleagues to increase the income threshold for New Yorkers who qualify for the DRIE program. With the expansion of this program some of our most vulnerable residents will be able to stay in their households and be able to afford other critical necessities for their daily life”

Shelly Nortz, Deputy Executive Director for Policy with the Coalition for the Homeless, said, “The Coalition for the Homeless is celebrating a small but very important victory today: Equal help for tenants with disabilities facing excessive rent burdens. We thank and applaud Assemblyman Kavanagh, Senator Savino, and Governor Cuomo for their leadership in swiftly helping to freeze rents for more tenants with disabilities, including veterans with 100 percent disability ratings who will now qualify for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption program. Bravo!”

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, said, “The disability community comprises many talented, capable individuals who are real assets to New York City. Yet this population often faces added hurdles when it comes to accessing and remaining in housing that is both affordable and can meet their living needs. New York is home to many talented individuals. Those in the disability community are no exception, but they often face hurdles in finding housing that is affordable and accessible. Increasing the income eligibility of DRIE to \$50,000 will protect an additional 1,000 disabled New Yorkers from being priced out of their homes. I applaud Governor Cuomo, Assemblyman Kavanagh, State Senator Savino, and the State legislature for their action on this important issue.”

Assemblymember David I. Weprin, Chair of the Assembly Task Force on People with Disabilities, said, “Raising the income limits to qualify for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) is a critical step in ensuring that New York remains

accessible and affordable. Once signed into law, this expansion of DRIE will further level the playing field for all New Yorkers. I am proud of the work my colleagues and I have done on passing this bill, and I pledge to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities through future legislation.”

Susan Dooha, Executive Director for the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY, said, “We applaud the Governor for signing the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) parity legislation, allowing more New Yorkers with disabilities to maintain their housing. In New York City alone, at least 1,000 people with disabilities can stay in their own homes. The Mayor and Council have the opportunity help New Yorkers with disabilities and their landlords, who will receive tax credits, by approving the DRIE parity. We urge them to act now.”

"New Yorkers with disabilities -- including many of my constituents-- are among those who feel the lack of affordable housing most acutely. By raising the income eligibility limit, DRIE takes a significant step toward easing this burden," said **Senator Daniel Squadron**. "I am proud to join the sponsors of this legislation, Assemblymember Kavanagh and Senator Savino, in passing this bill, and I thank Governor Cuomo for signing it into law. I look forward to the swift adoption of this expanded program by the Mayor and the City Council."

Assemblymember Keith Wright, said, “As Chair of the Housing Committee, I am proud that today we are able to reassure some of the most vulnerable members of our housing population that they will no longer have to live in fear of a rent increase that could threaten their ability to remain in their homes and in the communities they love. The Disability Rent Increase Exemption program (DRIE) is one of the most critical housing assistance programs we have and by raising the income threshold we can ensure meaningful relief for those who need it most. I commend Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh for his efforts on this important issue.”

“This expansion will help thousands of disabled New Yorkers who are struggling to maintain their financial well-being. The cost of living in New York City has risen dramatically in the last decade, so any assistance we can provide could be vital to ensuring that our disabled residents have a roof over their heads and are able to make ends meet,” said **Council Member James Vacca**.

“The Disability Rent Increase Exemption program (DRIE) is a lifeline to countless disabled tenants living in my district and across the city,” said **Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal**. “Disabled tenants across the City can rejoice in the knowledge that the

income limits for DRIE eligibility have been increased to \$50,000, creating parity with the income limits SCRIE, which we increased in the FY2014-15 Executive budget. With this increase, thousands of disabled New Yorkers, many of whom live on low, fixed incomes are now eligible to have their rent frozen, enabling them to continue living in their apartments and also afford food, medicine and other necessities.”

Katie Goldstein, Executive Director of Tenants & Neighbors, said, “Tenants & Neighbors applauds the Governor and the State legislature for significantly expanding the Disability Rent Increase Exemption Program. This expansion will provide much needed relief to disabled rent regulated tenants. We encourage New York City to quickly pass accompanying legislation so disabled tenants are able to benefit from this program expansion.”

Assemblymember Robert J. Rodriguez, said, “The rent burdens which impact our vulnerable populations, particularly our disabled, have gotten out of hand. Expanding this program to protect even more of the disabled population, is a common sense way to reduce housing insecurity and keep them in our communities.”

“DRIE supports some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers,” said **Assemblymember Daniel O’Donnell**. “I am proud to co-sponsor this important legislation and look forward to working with advocates to spread the word and encourage newly eligible tenants to apply.”

Assemblymember Denny Farrell, said, “By expanding DRIE we are helping 1,000 households with disabilities stay in their communities. I am glad that the Governor has signed Senator Savino and Assemblymember Kavanagh's bill and am proud to stand with them in the ongoing effort to support New Yorkers with disabilities.”

Assemblymember Helene Weinstein, Chair Assembly Judiciary Committee, said, “Raising the income limits for DRIE will allow many disabled New Yorkers to remain in their own apartments and the neighborhoods they call home. I was happy to join with Assemblyman Kavanagh in sponsoring this critical legislation and commend the Governor for signing it into law.”

Assemblymember Michael Cusick, said, “As a **former Chair of the Assembly Task Force on People with Disabilities**, I am well-aware of the many challenges low-income tenants living with disabilities encounter. In 2005 we established the DRIE program to give disabled folks the same opportunity as the seniors in the SCRIE program, which provides an exemption from rent increases. Assemblyman Kavanagh’s bill that the Governor has now signed into law to increase the income limit to \$50,000, the same as

the SCRIE income limit, is plain common sense. It fixes an omission that was not intended.”

State Senator Tony Avella, stated, “I was very pleased to learn that Governor Andrew Cuomo signed this bill into law, which would increase the income limit for households eligible for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption Program in New York. I signed onto this bill as a co-sponsor because it is our responsibility to protect individuals with disabilities from excess rent increases. I congratulate bill sponsors Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh and State Senator Diane Savino on the passage of this important legislation.”

Assemblymember Aravella Simotas, said, “As a lifelong advocate for people with disabilities, ensuring that our neighbors can stay in their homes and communities is one of my proudest accomplishments as a legislator. I am grateful to my colleagues and the governor for championing this effort.”

Assemblymember Felix W. Ortiz, said, “We will now be able to provide long awaited help to disabled tenants. I call on Mayor deBlasio to make this available as soon as possible.”

Assemblymember Shelly Mayer said, “With the Governor's signing of this bill many more disabled tenants of Yonkers will be able to stay in their homes. I look forward to this becoming effective in Yonkers, so low-income disabled tenants have the financial protections when they need them most.”

Assemblymember Mark Gjonaj, said, “Following our income eligibility increase for the SCRIE program that addressed the needs of our middle-class seniors, who live on fixed incomes, it is only right to extend the same protection to our disabled citizens living on similar limited incomes. With this reasonable increase to DRIE requirements, we will improve the quality of life for these citizens.”

Assemblymember Maritza Davila, said, “I want to thank Assemblymember Kavanagh, Governor Cuomo and all of my colleagues in Albany for enacting this important piece of legislation to protect our most vulnerable residents. Expanding DRIE income eligibility for disabled households will not only help constituents in my district to keep their homes within the community, it will also help tenant advocates in Bushwick and Williamsburg to preserve our affordable housing. I look forward to helping my newly eligible residents to enroll in DRIE.”

State Senator Adriano Espaillat, said, "DRIE is a critical program that has successfully kept thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers from losing their homes amidst skyrocketing rents," said Senate Housing Committee Ranking Member Adriano Espaillat. "We must keep fighting to maintain and expand SCRIE and DRIE eligibility, so tenants who need our help qualify for this lifeline

Councilmember Eric Ulrich, Chair of the Council's Committee on Veterans, said, "Access to affordable housing is a primary concern among many throughout the city, including our disabled seniors and veterans. This legislation will help those deserving groups who are grappling with New York City's high costs of living rightfully secure an affordable place to call home,"

Councilmember Jumaane D. Williams, Chair of the Council's Committee on Housing and Buildings, said, "I'm proud to work with my state and city elected officials, including Council Member Helen Rosenthal – the prime sponsor of the city legislation- to increase the income threshold for DRIE eligibility. As chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, my highest priority is to ensure that city government uses all of the levers at our disposal to help end the crisis of affordability in housing. We know that millions of New Yorkers pay more than half of their income in rent, and by expanding DRIE eligibility, we will ensure that more New Yorkers who have disabilities are protected against rent increases that would force many to choose between paying the rent and buying food or critical medicine."

Councilmember Inez E. Dickens, said, "As the cost of living and rent rises in the city, our disabled residents, along with our seniors, need all the financial assistance they can receive, so they can remain in their homes. The expansion of DRIE will not only increasing the eligibility requirements for this program, it will also expand it to 1,000 more households. I am proud to be part of this legislation that protects our neighbors by freezes housing costs for rent-regulated residents,"

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