Assembly Speaker Backs 30 Percent Rent Cap for HIV-Positive New Yorkers

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On December 10, Speaker of the New York State Assembly Sheldon Silver announced he would bring to a vote legislation to reduce the rent burden for more than 11,000 low-income New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS in government-subsidized housing to 30 percent of their income.

“The speaker supports the measure, and our goal is to pass it as early in session as possible,” Silver spokesperson Melissa Mansfield told New York City–based AIDS service organization Housing Works.

Under the existing policy, people living with HIV/AIDS are the only New York residents receiving housing assistance who are expected to pay more than 30 percent of their public benefits toward their rent. Because of this policy, many people are living on as little as $12 a day.

According to data from Shubert Botein Policy Associates, the rent bill cap could save the city more than $19 million from prevented evictions.

People living with AIDS have been paying upwards of 60 percent of their income on their rent, which is a dire and often insurmountable challenge for them, said Terri Smith-Caronia, Housing Works vice president for New York State advocacy and policy. “The passage of this legislation will guarantee critically needed housing stability for those whose health care is suffering.”

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