



OFFICE OF THE BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT  
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BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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March 15, 2011

Linda Gibbs  
Deputy Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Deputy Mayor Gibbs:

I am writing to share my concern for those families that will be left without rental assistance due to the loss of the "Advantage Program." This tactic, combined with the recent loss of the "Section 8" housing voucher program, has created a grim state of affairs for the homeless in our borough.

The rental assistance provided through the "Advantage Program" sought to prevent homelessness, and its loss will create a surge in the homeless population in the Bronx and across the City, in addition to having a negative impact on the already difficult economic position of the five boroughs.

Families have been waiting for vouchers, subsequent inspections and lease signings, only to find out that the housing voucher assigned to them has been pulled due to the elimination of this program. Due to this decision, many of these families will be left with no place to go, as shelters are turning them away and pushing them to start the housing process again, this time with more stringent rules.

While the City is converting family shelters into adult facilities to accommodate the demand for single men, single women and adult couples, these families will be left with no place to go.

The City of New York explicitly and contractually guaranteed each household participating in the "Advantage Program" rental assistance for one year, with the addition of a second year if they met specified conditions. The decision to shut down this program fails to meet the above commitment to those families that have received their vouchers and are unable to complete the process due to the lack of resources put to inspections and casework to the clients they seek to serve.

Page 2

Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs

March 15, 2011

Families have been guided towards finding apartments that are already too expensive, or to smaller units that match their voucher allowance with the expectation that the family would become self-sufficient enough to maintain their housing after one year. Without this program to provide some foundation for their housing option, it is clear that many will have to remain in the shelter system indefinitely.

Statistics show that one out of three families in the "Advantage Program" who lost rental assistance have applied for shelter, and one out of four families who lost their rental assistance have already been returned to the shelter system.

While the "Advantage Program" has its flaws, pulling the rug from under these families will have devastating consequences.

I urge you to reconsider this plan, as it will in the long run cost more to house these families in the shelter system than to implement a shutdown of the "Advantage Program."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruben Diaz Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ruben Diaz Jr.