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PRESS RELEASE

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NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY TO HAND OUT FIRST OF NEW SECTION 8 VOUCHERS SINCE REOPENING LISTS

Introduces New Customer Service and Web-based Enhancements for Section 8 Landlords

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) today handed out the first batch of new Section 8 vouchers to more than 200 eligible households at a briefing session held at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. In January, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and NYCHA Chairman Tino Hernandez announced that NYCHA's Section 8 waiting list was being reopened with an additional 22,000 new vouchers that would be made available—over a two-year period—for low income New Yorkers. In December 1994, NYCHA closed its Section 8 waiting list because of a drop in federal funding for Section 8 vouchers, making exceptions only for emergency applicants. The new vouchers were made available because of changes made at the local and Federal level, where in Washington Federal funding for Section 8 housing was increased by nearly \$100 million. NYCHA also announced a series of customer service and web-based enhancements for the more than 29,000 landlords who accept Section 8 vouchers. New features include the ability for private landlords to receive rent subsidy payments electronically, and to list available Section 8 apartments online.

“Today’s event demonstrates the value of the Section 8 program to provide affordable housing to thousands of New Yorkers who struggle to make ends meet,” said Chairman Tino Hernandez. “This would not have been possible without the leadership of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and the efforts of the New York Congressional delegation who have repeatedly fought for more funding for this important program.” The event “also recognizes NYCHA’s determination to improve services to the landlords who participate in the Section 8 program,” Chairman Hernandez added.

After reopening the long-closed Section 8 waiting list in February, NYCHA distributed a total of 469,284 applications in just three months. When the list closed again in May, more than 231,078 completed applications had been received. NYCHA staff is currently screening the

applications to make sure that eligibility requirements are being met. Income limits for Section 8 are set by the Federal government and vary depending on the number of people living in the household; for instance, an individual who earns less than \$24,800 annually, or a family of four making less than \$35,000 could qualify for Section 8 assistance. Voucher holders pay 30% of their gross income toward a Fair Market Rent for a private apartment as established by the Federal government. The remainder of the rent is paid directly to the landlord by NYCHA.

At today's briefing session each Section 8 applicant officially received a voucher, good for a six-month search, that entitles them to an apartment in the private housing market. Applicants were informed in detail about the Section 8 program, received a rental package which included tips on how to find an apartment, and learned about their rights and responsibilities as tenants, as well as those of their prospective landlords.

NYCHA also announced a series of customer service and web-based enhancements as well as other technology improvements on its Section 8 customer service web portal for landlords. Landlords will now have the ability to view current month payment detail and to review payment histories. They will also be able to list online apartments which are available for rental. Additionally, they will be able to take advantage of electronic direct deposit which expedites availability of the portion of the rent NYCHA pays to them. NYCHA is accepting enrollment requests from Section 8 landlords for direct deposit of their Section 8 payments. Direct deposit payments will begin in August 2007.

"For landlords who take part in the Electronic Direct Deposit program, there are many advantages such as the immediate availability of funds, no lost checks, no need to deposit paper checks, and of course, the peace of mind of knowing their payment is in the bank," said Chairman Hernandez.

The new direct deposit program and new customer self-service portal exemplify NYCHA's efforts to provide value-added service to participating Section 8 landlords. Planned upgrades on the customer self-service portal will provide them with the expanded capability to review inspection notices to help expedite the resolution of issues related to meeting apartment standard guidelines. Another improvement will allow landlords to send email requests to NYCHA staff responsible for voucher processing to speed resolution of issues and allow electronic transmittal of documents. A full set of Leased Housing Directives outlining practices and procedures is also now available to landlords on the portal, and is accessible by a password provided by NYCHA.

NYCHA's Section 8 program is the largest in the United States, administering 83,000 vouchers serving over 270,000 New Yorkers. More than 30,000 private landlords accept the vouchers. Income limits for Section 8 are set by the Federal government and vary depending on the number of people in the household.