

A Message From ASSEMBLYMEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN



ASSEMBLY MEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN COMMUNITY BOARD REPORT, SEPTEMBER 2020

I hope you had a safe and restful Labor Day weekend. Every Labor Day, I take time to reflect on workers' struggles, the successes of the labor movement, and how much more we must do to create an economy that works for the working class. I especially want to honor the sacrifices of New York's essential workers, who have been vitally important to New York's ongoing recovery from the pandemic.



Harvey

Fighting for the Post Office

At the end of August, I organized a rally along with State Senator Brad Hoylman, Councilwoman Carlina Rivera, District Leader John Blasco, community leaders and constituents rallied to denounce the actions against the United States Postal Service, removing machines and mailboxes is unconstitutional. We all should have the right to vote and take part in the democratic process while staying safe.



Update on My Commercial Rent Relief Bill

I am working closely with small business owners and Senator Hoylman to advance our bill to provide commercial rent relief to small business tenants, who have been hit hard by state mandated closures

due to COVID-19. Our bill ([A10901/ S08865](#)) requires landlords to partially cancel rent, commercial tenants to pay no more than one third of their contractual rent, and the government to fill the gap. I am proud to be hosting a legislative briefing on the bill next week, to bring more stakeholders into our coalition.

Small businesses play a vital role in the fabric of our economy and our communities, from jobs to providing essential goods and services. Too many of these beloved storefronts have been left behind by federal programs -- we need to step up and fill the gap so we can rebuild our neighborhoods.

If you're a small business owner or other stakeholder interested in learning more about this effort, feel free to reply to this email.

My Testimony Opposing the Division of Homes and Community Renewal (DHCR) Major Capital Improvement (MCI) Cost Schedule

Today I testified before DHCR to oppose their Reasonable Cost Schedule, the document that would set cost ceilings on what landlords can recoup for MCIs in rent regulated housing stock. I believe that the way in which DHCR issued the schedule is in violation of the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019, the law we fought so hard to pass.

We are not taking DHCR's misguided attempt sitting down: we are actively fighting against their schedule, which is overly broad, lacks transparency, and, if it allowed to stand, will hurt tenants. Read my testimony [here](#).



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Hearing on the COVID-19 Impact on People With Disabilities

Yesterday I took testimony on the impact of COVID-19 on individuals with disabilities and organizations that represent their interests. It is clear to me that our state must do a better job of providing support to these New Yorkers both in normal times and during crises. Last year, I formed a working group to address employment issues that people with disabilities face. I was glad to hear that Commissioner Sullivan of the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) is committed to retaining the job programs for people with disabilities overseen by her agency.

As a member of the Assembly's Task Force on People with Disabilities, it's extremely important to me that we give people with disabilities the opportunities to drive the policy changes they believe will best suit their community. I look forward to our ongoing work to make New York a leader in the fight for disability rights.

We Need to Raise Revenue to Avoid Serious Cuts

I initiated a letter in collaboration with the Fiscal Policy institute and core group of my colleagues pushing for increased revenue to prevent budget cuts to essential needs. We now count over 100 legislators, unions, and good government groups as signatories. Our advocacy efforts are working: Governor Cuomo, who has been reluctant to entertain the idea of revenue raisers, [said yesterday](#) that they were on the table as part of New York's response to its fiscal crisis.

We must do everything possible to minimize devastating budget cuts that will increase suffering, especially among poor and working people, place more burdens on strapped municipalities, and stall recovery. We must fight to maximize federal aid to fill New York's gaping budget gap, but we must also be prepared to raise needed revenue from those who can afford to contribute to our recovery. To get through this crisis, we are going to need both massive federal aid and a significant contribution from New York's most well-heeled residents. Please see letter and additional information here: <http://fiscalpolicy.org/legislators-unite-for-people-centered-recovery>

Update on School Reopening

Two weeks ago teachers and principals from all over NYC urged the City to postpone the first day of school. I know the Chancellor and his team have worked diligently to get us ready, but I am concerned we are far from there. No other big city in the country is trying to reopen like us, and for my son and 700,000 kids who may show up on the first day of classes we need to be sure we are ready. I believe that we have not explored all options for outside learning and underutilized space. I see the trauma that remote school has caused on so many families, especially low income families, and I understand that schools are important to many parents who are unable to work remotely, but remote learning simply cannot be the only answer. There are thousands of students all over NYC who will fall behind because virtual classrooms are not accessible for all NYers.

I urge the DOE to look into more outside spaces, creative solutions in our street so that our students can safely return to school should their families choose.

Census Subway Series

NYC Census 2020 announced the launch of the NYC "Census Subway Series" and "NYC Counts" census contest, to mobilize New Yorkers to self-respond to the census immediately, following President Trump's move to cut the census short by one month.

The Census Subway Series is a five-week challenge in which two neighborhoods from different boroughs will compete against each other to see which neighborhood posts the largest gains in its self-response rate over the course of a week. The first two neighborhoods to compete are Jamaica, Queens (current self-response rate: 49.4%) and Canarsie, Brooklyn (current self-response rate: 47.9%). Subsequent neighborhood competitions will be determined on a weekly basis, based on the latest self-response rate data. As of August 14, New York City's self-response rate is 55.6%, and the nation's is 63.6%.

In addition to bragging rights, residents of the competing neighborhoods -- as well as any New Yorker who completes the census during the next five weeks -- may be eligible to win exciting prizes from Seamless, Lyft, and MoMA as part of the new NYC Counts census contest. Any New Yorker who completes the census starting Monday, August 17 can enter the contest to win one or more of the following prizes:

- \$1,000 gift card from Seamless (six total)
- A \$50 Lyft credit voucher and annual CitiBike membership (100 total)
- An annual membership to The Museum of Modern Art and MoMA PS1 (a \$200 value; 25 total)

All New Yorkers must take a photo of their census completion confirmation page and upload it to the City's website to enter. Complete rules can be found at nyc.gov/censuscontest. The last day to enter is Monday, September 21, 2020.

Currently District 74 is at a 57% response rate, which is on par with the State, but the national average is 63%. Let's put the 74th District in the competition! Make sure to compete in the Census Subway Series!

COVID-19 Testing

Be sure to get tested if you haven't already. You can get a free COVID-19 test today. Text 'COVID TEST' to 855-48 to find a location near you.

Museums Are Reopening

Museums have started to reopen, as of August 24th, at 25% capacity with timed admissions. [Check out the opening details here!](#)

BOE is Hiring Election Day Workers

The NYS Board of Elections are looking for Election Day workers. Compensation is \$250 for Election Day and \$100 to go through the mandatory training. PPE and sanitizer will be supplied to workers. If you are interested, [click here](#).

Re-Opening Office and Virtual Open House

Our new district office located at 107 Avenue B (on the corner of 7th St and Avenue B) is opening slowly. Before COVID 19 hit, we had gathered the necessary signatures, gotten the appropriate permits and received the blessings of CB 3 for a Grand Opening and Block Party scheduled for May 9th.

If you need constituent services, please call 212-979-9696 and leave a message or email help.district74@gmail.com. My staff will follow up This week, we will be open Thursday, August 27th from 10am to 2pm - feel free to stop by to pick up masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. In the weeks

to follow, we will be open from 10:00am to 2:00 pm every Tuesday and Thursday by appointment only until further notice.

Please be on the lookout for our announcements of our regular schedule and our Virtual Open House scheduled for Thursday, September 17th.

Support Black-Owned + Operated Businesses in Lower Manhattan

Visit [Union Square Partnership's website](#) for a [list](#) of black-owned and operated businesses in Manhattan.

Feel free to contact Assembly Member Harvey Epstein's office with any questions or concerns.

Our office is temporarily located at

250 Broadway, Suite 2234

You can email us at epsteinb@nyassembly.gov or call us at 212-979-9696