

## A Message From ASSEMBLYMEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN



### ASSEMBLY MEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN COMMUNITY BOARD 6 REPORT, SEPTEMBER 2021

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Friend,

In less than two months the Legislature will reconvene for the 2022 session. We have a lot to do. During the off session I have been working with advocates to refine legislation on a variety of issues, everything from housing to criminal justice and rights for people with disabilities. I am looking forward to beginning 2022 with strong coalitions behind our policy priorities, which include: safely legalizing basement units, increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, ending private profiteering off of incarcerated New Yorkers, and expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure for all New Yorkers.

Harvey

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#### Governor Hochul Signs Two of My Bills

I'm pleased to report that the Governor recently signed two of my bills:

**A5605** requires municipalities to state in their local solid waste management plans what steps they are taking to increase recycling and composting. Diverting compostables and recyclables out of our waste stream is a key part of reducing greenhouse gas emissions—with this legislation, we're asking localities around the state to prepare a plan for how to accomplish this. Lowering these harmful gases is vital to ensure we meet the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. I'm proud to work with Senate sponsor May and Governor Hochul to fight against climate change from the local level on up. Read more about the legislation [here](#).

**A3136A** prohibits colleges and universities from receiving state funding if the institution requires that students participate in mandatory arbitration agreements as opposed to resolving disputes through the courts. Studies have shown that mandatory arbitration overwhelmingly favors the institutions that pay for it, rather than the consumers who are forced into it. The courts, in theory,

offer a more independent venue for dispute resolution between parties with unequal amounts of power (like a university and a student).

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### **Walkthrough with DDC and DOT**



I was happy to join with Councilmember Keith Powers and the Department of Design and Construction for a walkthrough of East 18th through East 38th Streets to ensure cyclists and pedestrians have safe access in and out of the East River Greenway.

We discussed better visibility and clear signage for residents. I look forward to working with the Community Board to improve this area for residents and all users of the Greenway.

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### **Solidarity with Taxi Drivers**



Photo credit: @MikiodoMedia

Late last month, I was arrested while protesting for debt relief for taxi drivers who are caught in a crisis.

Thousands of working class immigrant New Yorkers were sold taxi medallions by the City at inflated prices, forcing many of them to take on predatory loans that average over half a million dollars. The effects are devastating: these workers can owe over \$2,000 per month. They have had their bank accounts garnished and their homes seized. Drivers have committed suicide.

About a week ago, the drivers won. I was proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their struggle for relief and I am thrilled at their recent victory, where they secured reduction in the principal of their loans, lower monthly payments, and a City guarantee in the event of a default.

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### **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) APPLICATIONS OPEN**

Click here for more information and to apply or visit <https://nysrenthelp.otda.ny.gov/en/>.

If you have technical issues with your application please contact our office at 212-979-9696 between 9:30 and 5:30 Monday-Thursday or by emailing [help.district74@gmail.com](mailto:help.district74@gmail.com) at any time.

The New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) will provide significant economic relief to help low and moderate-income households at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability by providing rental arrears, temporary rental assistance and utility arrears assistance. Details on eligibility and the application process can be found here:

<https://nysrenthelp.otda.ny.gov/en/>.



## **A Step Forward in the Fight to Legalize Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**



When Hurricane Ida struck, the tragedies that took place across the City put a spotlight on the need to safely legalize basement apartments. In a recent hearing, as we took testimony from advocates and experts on the prospect of legalizing basement units, backyard cottages, garage conversions and other types of Accessory Dwelling Units, panel after panel reiterated support for a safe pathway toward legalization that protects tenants by mirroring internationally accepted safety standards. We have to act.

I am proud to be working with Senator Pete Harckham and a vast coalition of advocacy organizations that represent the interests of immigrants, older New Yorkers, tenants, and more. We are building momentum ahead of 2022 and I am looking forward to keeping you updated on our progress.

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## **Update on the Hearing for Employment Opportunities for People With Disabilities**



Late last month, I was pleased to see so many advocates and representatives of the disability community appear before the Assembly for this important hearing on how to improve employment among New Yorkers with disabilities. The employment rate of working-age people with disabilities is about 33 percent compared to about 75 percent for people without disabilities. New Yorkers with disabilities are more than twice as likely to live in poverty. COVID-19 has worsened the inequities: between April 2020 and March 2021, unemployment rates for people with disabilities averaged 16.2 percent, an increase of 8.9 percent over the prior year.

Addressing this crisis will require action from the government and the private sector. I'm proud to have passed legislation earlier this year to require the Department of Civil Service to study and report on the outcomes of its 55-b and 55-c programs, which identify positions that can be performed by people with physical and developmental disabilities. I have also introduced legislation that would expand the cap on the number of positions that can be set aside under the 55-b and 55-c programs. I look forward to advancing this bill in the upcoming session

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### **Remote Community Board Meetings the and Future of in Person Meetings**

In early September, the Legislature reconvened for an extraordinary session where, among other legislative fixes to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, we extended the ability of public bodies—like community boards—to conduct business virtually until January 15, 2022. In the meantime, my colleagues have introduced legislation that would enable virtual meetings permanently. I am supporting A8155, which would allow for the continuation of virtual meetings and hybrid meetings. I am looking forward to hearing from community boards how virtual meetings have been working and how making them permanent might serve them and the broader public.

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### **Report Issues With Manhattan Open Restaurants to NYC DOT**

In addition to 311, you can report issues directly to Manhattan Borough Commissioner Ed Pincar Jr at:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/contact/contact-form.shtml?routing=mn>

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### **Upcoming Events**

*Screening of All Riders - 11/13 @ 11:15*

All Riders, which chronicles the fight for accessibility in the NYC transit system, is screening this weekend at DOC NYC . I was happy to be included in the film and I urge you to check it out at the IFC Center or online. For ticket information, [click here](#). For IFC accessibility information, [click here](#).

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

*Our office is located at*

*107 Avenue B (store front)*

*You can email us at [help.district74@gmail.com](mailto:help.district74@gmail.com) or call us at 212-979-9696*