



Phara Souffrant Forrest

FIGHTS TO GET YOU JUSTICE!

Hello friend,

It has been an incredible year for me and for our district. Together, we passed the Less Is More Act and created a more humane and caring parole system. We passed a historic budget that raised taxes on the wealthiest and fully funded our public schools and transit system. We delivered rent relief for tenants and expanded unemployment. And through all of it, I got to stand up and say “working people deserve more.”

We’ve helped hundreds of you access unemployment and supported many of you in navigating accessing benefits when underfunded programs can make it difficult. We’ve supported your tenant organizing or union drive, and I’ve been proud to say in all of those moments: this office, my office, is an office that stands for working people.

And personally, this year saw the birth of my son, David. Having David has given me a whole new understanding of why fighting for progressive change is so urgent. I am proud of what we accomplished, but as we enter into the holiday season, I am forced to reflect on David’s future. So as we come together with friends and family to break bread and exchange gifts, let us all remember that many of us, even those at our own tables, are struggling right now and deserve better. And let us all join together to fight for it.

Assembly Member
Phara Souffrant Forrest



Legislation Next Year

Next year will be a very important year for the State Legislature. While we continue to recover from the lockdowns of COVID-19 and rebuild our economy, major decisions will be put to us. As always, I’m committed to fighting for our community, working class, black and brown, people with disabilities, LGBT and especially trans and gender non-conforming people, and those affected by the criminal legal system. While we are still refining our full platform for the year, here are some of my top priorities:

Treatment Not Jail

I am reintroducing a bill this year called Treatment Not Jail that will revolutionize how we deal with people’s substance abuse issues, mental health needs, and intellectual impairments. Today, we often take people who are sick or have severely unmet needs and lock them up when they are accused of crimes. The result is terrible for the individuals and their communities: people’s needs go unaddressed, and the trauma of prison serves to only compound their distress, making their return back to the community all the more difficult.

My bill presents an alternative: by expanding access to diversion courts, where people can elect to pursue treatment instead of time in prison, we can treat the underlying situation which is a crisis of mental health in our society. To build strong communities, we need treatment, not jail.

New Deal for CUNY and Make CUNY Free Again

New York City is home to one of the finest public education systems in the country. CUNY has helped so many of us, including me, to realize our full potential and access work that is meaningful and well compensated. Every New Yorker deserves a chance to get on that path, and that is why I am committed to the New Deal for CUNY, which would make CUNY tuition free, as well as hire thousands of additional full time faculty to improve the quality of our CUNY education.

If you are a CUNY student, parent, or faculty member and are interested in getting involved in the fight for a better CUNY please reach out to us at ad57@nyassembly.gov.

Resources

For many of us, the holidays are a time of warmth and comfort, when we can spend some time with our families. But for many others, it can be a time that causes financial distress, feelings of loneliness, and for those without a strong safety net and who may not have housing, it can be a dangerous time. Please reach out to our office 718-596-0100 or email ad57@nyassembly.gov to learn more about where you can get resources, or drop off food or toys to help those less fortunate.

My loving wishes,
Phara Souffrant Forrest

Fighting for a More Equitable Health Care System

This year I will continue my fight to improve our health care system. As a nurse I have seen firsthand how our profit driven system makes access to health care difficult for everyone. A better system, one that does not create anxiety about surprise bills, finding covered providers, or securing referrals for necessary treatment, is possible. That is why I am a strong supporter of a bill to create a single payer health care system in New York: The New York Health Act.

In the meantime, I will also be fighting for legislation to create more dignity for our home care workers, Fair Pay for Home Care, which should also create room to expand those who are able to access long term care through Medicaid. I will also continue to look into other ways we can help make sure our elders are able to secure the highest quality care.

If you or a loved elder are struggling with cost or access to quality treatment, and would like to join me in advocating around this issue, please reach out to us at ad57@nyassembly.gov.

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Assembly Member
**Phara
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Fights to Get You Justice!



Both David's mom and dad are CUNY grads, and someday, I hope, he will be too!

Protecting Tenants' Right to Remain

Everyone should have the right to remain in their apartment. But if you are an unregulated renter, you know the anxiety caused by the fact that, when your lease comes up, your landlord can choose any reason to push you out, including making your rent unaffordable. This causes so many New Yorkers to either find their income squeezed as they try to remain in their home over long years, or moving between apartments every year or two as rents increase. Home should be a place of safety, and a place where you can make long term plans about your life. That's why I support Good Cause Eviction, which would guarantee that everyone has a right to remain in their apartment, by requiring that landlords issue lease renewals unless a tenant is significantly behind on rent or otherwise in serious violation of the terms of their lease agreement.

If you are an unregulated renter and want to support our work to make sure everyone has a right to remain in their home, please reach out to us at ad57@nyassembly.gov.