



Phara Souffrant Forrest

FIGHTS TO GET YOU JUSTICE!

Hello everyone,

*This past year, the second year of the pandemic, has presented enormous difficulties as well as great joys for me. For many of us, the relief that came from vaccine availability after experiencing dangerous work conditions or isolation at home was long overdue—and sorely needed. In my personal life, I experienced the greatest miracle of my life to date: the birth of my son David. However, I also sadly lost my father, who was residing in a nursing home with substandard conditions. To me, this year has shown one thing above all else: all of us people, across every stage of our life, deserve dignity, comfort, time, and support from others around us. Young or old, the past two years have shown us that we simply cannot make it on our own, that we need others to help us live the lives we deserve. And it's for that reason that I'm proud to share with you my 2022 Legislative Platform, **Dignity for our Whole Lives**.*

Assembly Member
Phara Souffrant Forrest

2022 Legislation: Dignity for our Whole Lives

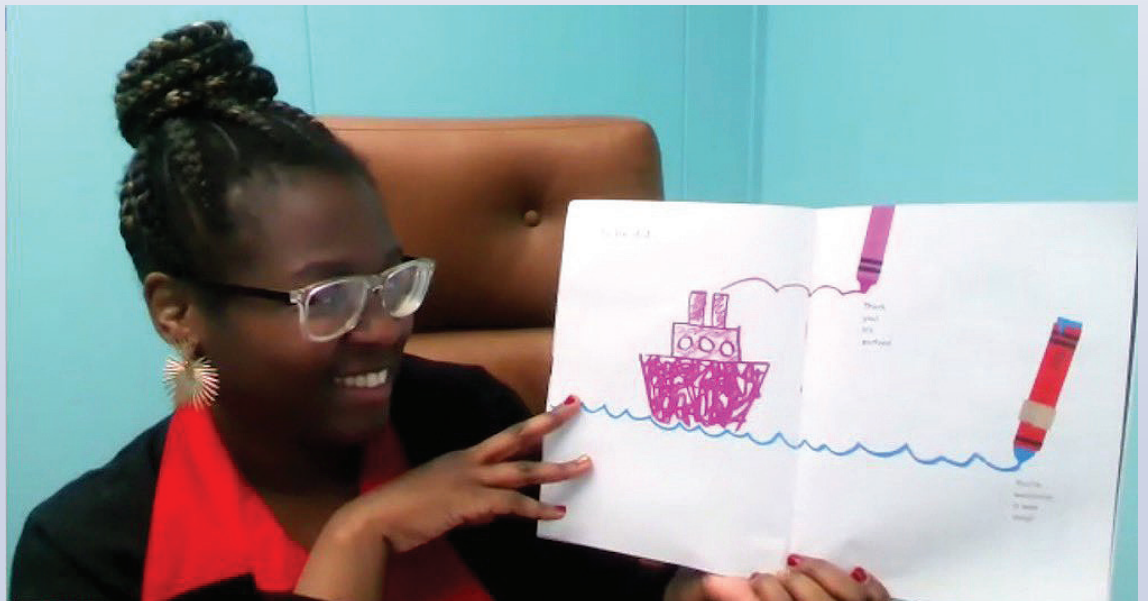
Below, I outline the bills I will be championing in 2022 to make sure every one of us gets the dignified life we deserve.

Birth and Childhood

The beginning of our lives is a delicate one. Pregnancy and the first years of a child's life can be a beautiful time, but it can make the ordinary strains of balancing life, work, and family responsibilities even more difficult.

Universal Child Care Act (A8623/S7595)

Today, many parents struggle to access or afford child care. Affordable child care programs and other programs aimed at supporting working class children and families are chronically underfunded and are very limited in their capacity to meet the needs of New York families. The Children and Families Reinvestment Act would significantly increase funding for these programs, create new mechanisms to fund innovative new approaches to child wellbeing through trauma prevention and mitigation programs, and most importantly, would guarantee every family in New York the right to child care. With a Universal Child Care program, every working parent can sleep well knowing their child is getting the care they deserve.



*Me reading one of my favorite children's books, **Red: A Crayon's Story** to children at St. Francis De Sales School for the Deaf.*

Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (A8604/S8157)

Today, many younger parents don't discover that their infant has Down Syndrome until very late in pregnancy or after the child is born. The complications that can emerge from Down Syndrome require significant preparation and support, and a surprise at birth can produce difficulties for a child and their family. I am sponsoring a bill to make non-invasive prenatal testing available to all pregnant people regardless of age, so that every child receives the support they need.



My husband Charles and I at our son David's Christening.

Adolescence and Young Adulthood

As we mature, we need more support to pursue the best opportunities available. Today, too many of us are prevented from realizing our potential due to lack of resources. I believe our society should give every young person the chance to shape their life.

New Deal for CUNY (A5843A/S4661A)

In New York City we have an incredible higher education system that is built to serve working families. CUNY serves predominantly people of color and provides so many New Yorkers with the knowledge and skills they need to live a dignified life with a rich understanding of the world. Unfortunately, CUNY has suffered from decades of underfunding, beginning with the racist decision to implement tuition costs as the system began to serve more families of color. I am incredibly proud to support the New Deal for CUNY, which will restore free tuition and fund high-quality faculty, as well as better support for students.

Mental Health in Schools (A5019/S1969)

After years of pandemic, young people are struggling more than ever in schools. With more social isolation, anxiety, and the effects of social media, our young people need support. That's why I will fight to ensure that every school in our state has a social worker and a school psychologist onsite.

Adulthood

The housing crisis, lack of access to health care, criminalization of our communities, and corporate greed all make the years of our adulthood more difficult. These bills ensure that we have a just economy so that our adult years are lived with freedom and dignity.

Treatment Not Jail (A8524/S2881B)

For too long, our society has dealt with behavior considered anti-social by taking people away from their communities and locking them up instead. Year after year, people with disabilities, substance abuse issues, and mental health struggles are sent to jail, and then released back into the community after having had traumatic and damaging experiences that only make their issues worse, with little to no support. This does not make our communities safer, it does not treat families well, and it is certainly not humane. We can and must end this injustice that disproportionately affects Black families. We can do that by passing my bill, Treatment Not Jail, which will dramatically expand diversion courts, so that anyone with functional impairment, whether that is intellectual disability, substance abuse, or mental health issues, can elect to pursue a path where they receive treatment for their issues, instead of being locked up in a prison cell.

Housing Access Voucher Program (A3701B/S2804B)

When crisis hits in our capitalist economy, the poorest of us often see the floor fall out from under us. Homelessness is a choice we make as a society, and it's a choice we can change. That's why I support the Housing Access Voucher Program, which will create a state-level version of the federal Section 8 Voucher and put an end to homelessness.

421-a Repeal (A1931/S0260)

For years, our state has been giving away hundreds of millions of dollars each year to private developers to build unaffordable housing, often in working class communities like ours. Let's end the 421-a tax exemption and make sure that we do not replace it with another thinly disguised giveaway to market-rate developers.

Empower More Nursing Instructors

Today we are experiencing a serious shortage of health care workers, especially nurses. As COVID-19 continues to devastate our communities, the shortage of health care workers prevents us from getting the care we need. This bill will help alleviate this shortage by allowing Doctors of Nursing Practice as well as Masters of Nursing students to teach courses and expand availability.



I visited Rikers in solidarity with hunger strikers to hear about the challenging and dangerous conditions faced by people in jail right now. I'm fighting for Treatment Not Jail because overcrowded jails can make people more likely to commit crimes, and we need a system that helps our communities get better and safer.

Good Cause Eviction (A5573/S3082)

Everyone should have the right to remain in their apartment. Yet every year New Yorkers across the state are forced to pack up and leave their homes due to unfair rent increases or a landlord’s decision not to allow a lease renewal. 4.5 million New York families live in unregulated housing and are being forced to live transiently, moving from one neighborhood to another as rents become more and more unaffordable. Home should be a place of safety and stability. That’s why I support Good Cause Eviction, which would guarantee that everyone has a right to remain in their apartment, by preventing arbitrary evictions unless a tenant is significantly behind on rent or otherwise in serious violation of the terms of their lease agreement.

This year I rallied to make sure every New Yorker had the right to remain in their home. Let’s pass Good Cause Eviction!

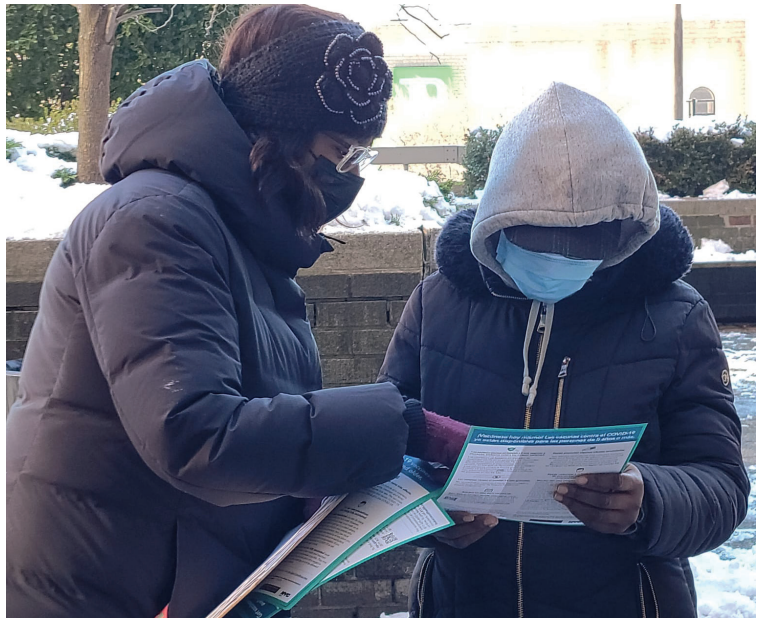


Aging

When we reach the last years of our lives, we and our loved ones deserve comfort and dignity. Today, unfortunately, a lack of resources and mismanagement mean that quality care is increasingly difficult to access for our elderly. These issues affect not only our seniors, but their families who are left to support them where quality care is unavailable. The bills I support will help reshape our care economy to ensure that workers and patients receive the best care.

Medical Aid in Dying (A4321/S6471)

Often the end of life involves emotional and physical difficulty, especially if end of life health conditions cause significant impairment in mobility. Medical Aid in Dying would empower our seniors to make their own decisions about the end of their life, rather than requiring them to wait until illness becomes too severe to treat or suffering from illness without treatment. By giving our seniors their own choices about the end of their lives, we can ensure real dignity for the final days of our loved one’s lives, following in the footsteps of states like New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington which have passed similar legislation.



With the explosion of Omicron, my office quickly organized a response, and has held regular COVID test giveaways in housing facilities across the district. If you need COVID tests, please reach out to us.

Fair Pay for Home Care (A6329A/S5374A)

Today, there is a massive shortage of quality home care available for working-class seniors. This is due to chronically low wages for home care workers, decreasing the supply of care workers and lowering standards of care. By raising wages for home care workers to 150% of the local minimum wage, we can increase availability of home care, improve care standards, and ensure dignity for workers and patients alike.

Accountability in Adult Care Facilities

Currently certain Adult Care Facilities are providing substandard care without strong mechanisms for accountability. I am introducing two bills, one to track the demographic trends within ACF patient communities and the likely possibility of disparate racial impact on care outcomes, and one to require greater community feedback on the applications for new care facilities. These bills will help make sure that our elders residing in Adult Care Facilities receive the care they need, while improving transparency and accountability.



My father got to meet my son just before passing away last year. I so wish long term care facilities offered better care for working class seniors like my father, and I will fight to make sure that our facilities provide quality care with real accountability and respect for our elders.

Our platform attempts to reach people at every stage of their life and give them dignity, support, and empowerment. Our bills put forward common-sense solutions to some of our most difficult and pressing concerns, and do so in a way that speaks to the experience of the working majority in our State. I look forward to working together to move this vision forward, and I invite you to join me. If you would like to join our efforts to pass these important bills, please reach out to us at ad57@nyassembly.gov.

My warmest wishes,
Assemblywoman Phara Souffrant Forrest

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Winter/Spring 2022



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**Phara
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Fights To Get You Justice!

**Having trouble with your apartment? Need legal services?
Assistance with your benefits? Reach out to our office!**

Assembly Member
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Souffrant
Forrest**

**Join an event or volunteer with our office:
bit.ly/pharaoffice**

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