



Phara Souffrant Forrest

FIGHTING FOR YOU!

Letter from Phara

Dear neighbors,

I hope you all had a safe and happy holiday season. By the time you receive this newsletter, we will be entering Black History Month, when we recognize the triumphs and struggles of Black Americans.

These are challenging times for our community and for all of District 57. The legacy of segregation and legalized discrimination continues to perpetuate itself in disparate rates of homelessness, mortality, and incarceration. The cost of living continues to rise. Families struggle to afford childcare and many of them have left the city. Many of us are uncertain and anxious about the future and whether our government will continue to provide the resources needed for us to live a good life.

But it's important to remember that we are not the first to fight on even when conditions are difficult.

I'd like to share with all of you some thoughts I shared at this year's annual Martin Luther King Day breakfast at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Dr. King strove to unite people around a common goal: dignity and equality for all people. That goal cannot be accomplished



by any one individual. It must be built brick by brick like a wall, and it can only be built if we work together, each carrying our own brick. So I'd like to invite all of you to join me in building a District 57 where we all can thrive. For as Dr. King said, we may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now.

This year, I will continue to be a champion for the people of AD 57 in Albany and in Brooklyn. I'll be fighting to expand access

to healthcare for new mothers and people with mental illness. I will fight for real investments in our social safety net, from universal childcare to social housing and free higher education. I'll also continue bringing the lived experiences of my constituents to Albany and finding ways to celebrate the amazing work you all do.

In this newsletter, I'm excited to share my legislative priorities for 2025, as well as some highlights of 2024. As always, if you have any questions, concerns, ideas, or requests, please contact my office at 718-596-0100 or ad57@nyassembly.gov.

In solidarity,
Phara 

2024 Highlight: Supporting Local Leaders



Last year, I supported street safety advocates in their fight for a protected bike lane on Bedford Avenue, along with Senator Jabari Brisport and District Leader Shaquana Boykin.



At my 2024 State of the District, I honored community leaders fighting for tenants' rights and mental health care.



Enjoying the summer with the Union Street Strong block association.

My 2025 Legislative Platform

In Albany, the legislative session has begun, and I'm busy advocating for the things my neighbors need the most: affordable housing and healthcare, workplace justice, and a functioning transportation system, funded by higher taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers. This year, I'm also reintroducing a bill to make sure insurance companies aren't profiting from creating climate disasters, and I'm using my role as chair of the Assembly Task Force on New Americans to support and integrate newly arrived immigrants into our state.

Immigration	A821	Ensures elected officials can visit social services facilities such as migrant shelters
	A861	Establishes a program to deliver comprehensive case management in shelters through the Office of New Americans
	TBA	Simplifies requirements for immigrant students to qualify for in-state tuition at SUNY and CUNY
Criminal Justice	A4869	Treatment Not Jail: Expands diversion courts for people with mental health or substance abuse diagnoses
	A3251	Cecilia's Act for Rights in the Sex Trades: Relates to the decriminalization of sex work
	A1261	Rights Behind Bars: Protects the rights of people in jails, prisons, and forensic facilities
Education	A890	New Deal for SUNY: the New York State Higher Education Equality Act
	A832	Requires one clinical mental health staffer per 1,000 students at SUNY and CUNY
Health	A1430	Prohibits the sale of medical adhesives and bandages containing PFAS
	A1119	Relates to the transparency and quality of care of operators of adult care facilities
	A2698	Establishes an awareness campaign on the use of hormone replacement therapy for perimenopause and menopause
	A895	Requires insurance to cover a car seat to be provided upon discharge of a newborn from a hospital
	A4018	New York Dignity in Pregnancy and Childbirth Act: Requires perinatal facilities to implement an evidence-based implicit bias program
Housing & Community Development	A1603	Shortens the residency requirement for succession of a rent-stabilized apartment
	TBA	Prohibits imprisonment for sleeping or camping in public spaces
	A3842	Insuring Our Communities Act: Implements CLCPA targets for insurers and prohibits blue lining
Labor	A829	Exempts unemployment compensation from state income tax
	A892	Requires employers to provide paid vacation time
	A1399	Increases the amount of family leave time that may be taken in a year
	A1394	Creates a joint committee to provide oversight on unemployment insurance

2024 Budget Victories

Last year, I was proud to champion the elimination of insulin copays in the Assembly. This legislation was included in the budget and went into effect on January 1, meaning anyone with a state-regulated health insurance plan will no longer pay copays on insulin.

We also accomplished something I've fought for since being elected to office: Good Cause Eviction protections for certain tenants in unregulated apartments. In December, we held a town hall meeting to educate residents about the new law and how to do research on their building's history.

And we finally made progress on the redevelopment of 1024 Fulton Street into a 100% affordable housing development with community facilities. Last year's budget allocated \$3.75 million to the demolition of the existing vacant structure, which is now underway.



Starting January 1, 2025, New York insurers cannot charge copays for insulin.



In November, we hosted a community meeting with Empire State Development to get community input on the redevelopment of 1024 Fulton Street.

Supporting Local Initiatives

Every year, legislators get a small pot of state funding to share with non-profit organizations in the district. Last year, I was able to use this funding to support public schools, arts programs, and social services for the formerly incarcerated and those in recovery.

I was also able to use capital funding to install new escalators at the Brooklyn Hospital Center, as well as upgrade basic infrastructure and sustainability measures at PS 11 (Purvis Behan), PS 270 (Johann DeKalb), and PS 375 (Jackie Robinson).



At our summer health fair cohosted by START Treatment and Recovery Centers.



At PS 11's legislative breakfast, awarding state funding for sustainability upgrades.

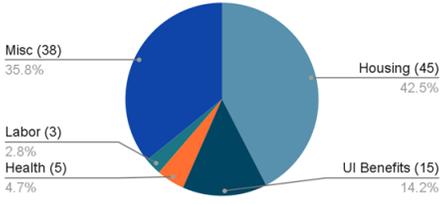
BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	FREE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR DISTRICT RESIDENTS	\$20,000
JACK ARTS	PERFORMANCES AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS	\$25,000
KINGS AGAINST VIOLENCE INITIATIVE	COMMUNITY HEALING AND ENGAGEMENT AT INGERSOLL HOUSES	\$35,000
PARTNERSHIP WITH CHILDREN	SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT PS 67	\$15,000
PUBLIC HEALTH SOLUTIONS	SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CENTER IN FORT GREENE	\$35,000
SOUL2SOULZ	SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND FILM PROGRAM AT EBBETS FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL	\$25,000
START TREATMENT & RECOVERY CENTERS	OUTREACH AND TRAINING INITIATIVE	\$25,000
YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK	SUMMER TEEN PROGRAMMING AT THE BED-STUY YMCA	\$15,000
FLANBWAYAN HAITIAN LITERACY PROJECT	FLANBWAYAN GIRLS SUMMER PROGRAM	\$25,000
GLOBAL KIDS	PROGRAMS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP	\$30,000

Constituent Services Recap

In 2024, my dedicated district staff and volunteers worked on over 355 constituent cases.

Case Breakdown

Jan-Oct 2024



Housing and unemployment continue to be the top issues for AD 57 constituents, and I've introduced some legislation to respond to the challenges we are seeing in the district. One new bill (A4666) will require a local social services district to accept or deny

an application for public assistance no later than thirty days after the date of the application, to cut down on delays in receiving public assistance.

Constituent Service Success Stories

Issue: The constituent experienced repeated flooding in her NYCHA apartment and was ignored by management.

Outcome: Our office ensured that NYCHA management addressed the issue by arranging long-needed repairs. The constituent was also transferred to a new apartment, allowing her to live without risk of flooding.

Issue: The constituent faced fraudulent charges on his EZ-Pass account due to a stolen transponder, leading to thousands in unauthorized tolls.

Outcome: After we reached out to the DMV, the charges were credited back, and his account was restored.

Issue: The constituent experienced delays in unemployment claims due to contact issues with DOL.

Outcome: We escalated the case and DOL resolved the claim, and the constituent was able to receive payments.

Issue: A constituent had his Medicaid terminated unexpectedly. This disrupted his access to essential epilepsy medication, putting his health at significant risk.

Outcome: After persistent follow-ups from our team, the constituent's Medicaid was reinstated, ensuring continued access to his life-saving medication.

Need support from my office?

My district office is open Monday through Friday from 10am-5pm

To schedule an appointment, please call 718-596-0100 or email ad57@nyassembly.gov.

New York State Assembly • Albany, New York 12248

Your Assembly Newsletter

District Edition, Winter 2025



Assembly Member
Phara Souffrant Forrest

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PAID
Albany, New York
Permit No. 75



This work is possible thanks to the efforts of my staff: Director of Community Affairs Justin, Legislative and Communications Director Brian, Legislative Aide Mirabel, Constituent Liaison Meeks, and Chief of Staff Karen.

2024 Highlight: Local Organizing

As you know, we don't just wait for those in need to come to us, but we proactively reach out to residents as well – we knocked on over 700 doors this year and called over 250 residents, helping us to build relationships and identify constituent needs.

In addition, we held our Brooklyn ROOTS organizing training for the second year in a row. 25 AD 57 leaders participated in a 4-session course on organizing fundamentals, relationship building, state government 101, and issue-based campaigns.



With staff and volunteers at the Community Board 9 resource fair.



Constituents brainstorm an organizing plan to address community challenges at a session of our Brooklyn ROOTS leadership development workshop.