

# Assemblymember Harvey Epstein

Assembly District 74



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Dear Neighbor,

Soon you'll get tired of hearing about historic wins - but we had more this week!

See you around the district,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harvey Epstein", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Harvey

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## Protecting Reproductive Health



This week, I co sponsored and helped pass legislation to protect and strengthen women’s reproductive rights. The measures affirm a woman’s right to choose in New York State, require insurers to cover cost-free contraception and prohibit discrimination against employees based on reproductive health choices (A.21, A.585-A, A.584). For years, the Assembly has passed reproductive rights legislation in the ongoing fight for full women’s equality only to have the measures rejected by the state Senate. But with new Senate leadership that recognizes that reproductive rights are human rights and are essential to a woman’s health, safety, opportunity and economic security, the long-overdue measures are set to become law.

A woman’s body is her own, and politicians have absolutely no place interfering in her reproductive choices. The idea that a woman is not capable of making her own health care decisions is simply ridiculous and is grounded in misogyny, sexism and inequality. These measures not only help ensure reproductive freedom, but also help ensure a woman has control over her own future.

A woman’s constitutional right to choose was established by the U.S. Supreme Court in Roe v. Wade 46 years ago, but the war on women has continued in full force since then. States all over the country are enacting laws that heavily regulate abortion or require women to jump through hoops to receive one. Eighteen states require women be given counseling before the procedure, and 27 states require a waiting period before the procedure can be performed. Now, with a White House with a dismal record on reproductive rights and a conservative Supreme Court, the threat to overturn Roe v. Wade is even more real.

The Assembly legislation, known as the Reproductive Health Act, codifies the federal protections of Roe v. Wade into New York State law. This law emphasizes that the goal of public health policy should be access to quality health care, not to place restrictions and undue burdens on patients and providers. I was proud to see the Governor sign this bill on Tuesday this week.

The Assembly also once again passed the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act (CCCA), which would codify the requirement under the Affordable Care Act that health insurers provide cost-free coverage of all FDA-approved contraceptives when they are prescribed by a health care provider (A.585-A).

Additionally, legislation was passed prohibiting employers from discriminating against employees based on their or their dependent’s reproductive health decisions. It also bars employers from accessing private medical information about their employees without the employee’s prior informed, written consent (A.584).

It’s been almost 100 years since women gained the right to vote and 46 years since the right to choose was affirmed, yet here we are still fighting for equality. With these long-overdue measures finally set to become law, we’re taking an important step forward and sending a clear message that women’s rights should never be up for debate.

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### The DREAM Act



This week I also co-sponsored and helped pass the Jose Peralta New York State DREAM Act to help ensure the children of immigrants can achieve their college dreams (A.782). The legislation is named in honor of the late State Sen. Jose Peralta, who championed the bill and who tragically passed away in November.

They may not have been born here, but ‘Dreamers’ are New Yorkers through and through. They grew up here, went to school here and they deserve the same opportunities to succeed as everyone else. While the White House is more committed to building walls and tearing families apart, New York is standing up for our immigrant communities, promoting equality and investing in our future. With new leadership in the state Senate, this is the year the DREAM Act becomes a dream come true.

The legislation would allow undocumented college-bound students who meet certain eligibility requirements – such as attending high school in New York – to access the state Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and other assistance programs, including the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), Education Opportunity Program (EOP), Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (C-STEP) and similar programs at community colleges.

“Dreamers” have attended New York public schools and already qualify for in-state tuition at SUNY and CUNY colleges. It’s counterproductive and cruel to put a halt to their education this far into their academic journeys.

The bill also establishes a scholarship fund with private donations – the DREAM Fund – and expands access to the New York State College Tuition Savings (529) Program so children of undocumented immigrant parents with a valid taxpayer identification number can set up tuition savings accounts.

This bill is about fairness and about doing right by the “Dreamers” who’ve helped make New York the vibrant and diverse place that it is today. Instead of putting up barriers to unjustly punish children who did nothing wrong, we’re tearing them down to ensure all students – regardless of immigration status – are able to pursue a college degree.”

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## Upcoming Events

Henry Street & GOLES Housing Town Hall | January 26 | 10AM-3PM | 301 Henry Street

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## Resources

- Serve your neighborhood! Community boards are the independent and representative voices of their communities & the most grass-roots form of local government. Click here to apply for a spot in your local community board!
- Our Youth Council deadline has been extended to the end of the month! See below.