

A Message From ASSEMBLYMEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN



Dear Neighbor,

I first want to wish you a Happy Passover and an early Happy Easter! I know these celebrations are very different from what we are used to this year, but I hope you are able to connect with friends and family virtually. In the spirit of giving, I would encourage you to donate to groups doing great work helping with food distribution in our community during the COVID-19 outbreak. People are in need. Food banks and distribution sites are telling us that demand is way up and there are few new funds. I hope you will join me and help. Here are some places to donate to that are helping local residents:

- [Vision Urbana](#) - Is providing regular food distribution to low income seniors in our community.
- [City Harvest](#) - City Harvest is committed to rescuing and delivering food for the 2.5 million New Yorkers who were depending on us before the COVID-19 crisis, and the thousands more who need us now, as the devastating economic impact of this pandemic becomes a reality.
- [Grand St Settlement](#) - Is providing food deliveries to seniors in our community.
- [Henry St Settlement](#) - Is serving thousands of meals each day to seniors through Meals on Wheels and their Senior Center

As we approach the fifth week of the state of emergency caused by the coronavirus/COVID-19 outbreak, [I want to share some numbers with you here.](#)

This data suggests that the social distancing and other measures the state and city are taking may be working and that we must continue to observe these protocols until further notice. We are doing this together and flattening the curve but a concerning disparity is emerging: it's clear that low income Black and Latino residents are dying in higher numbers. We need to continue working to address the structural inequities that existed before this crisis started that are leading to these disturbing outcomes. We can get through this together, but stay safe and keep covered up while outside.

I have taken a number of steps including calling for better protections for seniors in Section 202 housing and demanding the cancellation of Rent Guidelines Board meeting and issuing a one year rent freeze to help struggling tenants. Read more about those efforts below.

I know this is a difficult time for so many New Yorkers who are newly jobless, grieving a friend or loved one, or struggling to finish a semester. My office is here for you to provide as much help as we can. You can reach out at 212-979-9696 and leave a message -- my staff will return your call as promptly as possible. You can also email me at help.district74@gmail.com.

Take a look below to find out about the many resources available to you in your time of need, or how you can help others.

See you around the district,

Harvey

In This Newsletter:

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 1. Jewish Vote Virtual Seder 4/13 at 5pm ([Register here!](#))
 2. Hang with Harvey Happy Hour - 4/17 at 5:30pm ([Register here!](#))
 2. Are You Having Trouble Filing for Unemployment?
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Upcoming Events

Jewish Vote Virtual Seder 4/13 at 5pm

The Jewish Vote invites you to our 5780 virtual Freedom Seder!

What: The Jewish Vote Freedom Seder

When: Monday, April 13th 5-8 PM, with abundant breaks for meals, discussion, & schmoozing

Where: In all of our homes via zoom!
[RSVP here](#) and share/join the Facebook event!

Hang with Harvey Happy Hour 4/17 at 5:30pm

On Friday, April 17th, I will be hosting a Hang with Harvey Happy Hour at 5:30pm. Join me and talk to me about issues related to COVID-19 and resources available. [Register here!](#)

Are You Having Trouble Filing for Unemployment?

This unprecedented crisis is straining the Department of Labor's (DOL) resources and causing frustrating wait times for constituents. I along with many of my colleagues are pushing to increase those resources to handle the high volume of claims and the Governor is responding accordingly.

If you have been instructed to call the Department of Labor Telephone Claims Center to complete filing your claim, you no longer need to call. A representative from the NYS DOL will call you back within 72 hours.

If you are having trouble getting through to the DOL on the phone, email me at help.district74@gmail.com with your name, address, and phone number and my office will provide your information to the DOL so an operator can reach out to you directly.

Advocating for Seniors in Section 202 Housing

Earlier this week, Comptroller Stringer and I wrote to The New York City Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene and Housing Preservation and Development to call on them to take additional precautions to protect the 25,000 seniors who live in Section 202 housing. These New Yorkers are among the most at risk for contracting coronavirus and they are depending on the City to step up where the federal government has failed them.

We are proposing Section 202 housing developments adopt protocols that are currently in place at nursing homes. You can read the letter [here](#) and coverage by the New York Daily News [here](#).

Absentee Ballot Voting

The Governor announced he will issue an Executive Order to ensure New Yorkers can vote by absentee ballot in the June 23rd primary elections.

The Governor previously issued an Executive Order to move the presidential primary election from April 28 to June 23, aligning it with the congressional and legislative primaries in New York.

Calling for the Cancellation of Rent Guidelines Board Meetings in 2020

My Assembly colleagues and I are calling on Governor Cuomo to cancel Rent Guidelines Board meetings in 2020. The Rent Guidelines Board meets every year to determine whether rent regulated tenants should be subjected to rent increases. We believe that raising rents on these New Yorkers, many of whom are already living on fixed incomes, would be unconscionable during this public health crisis. We are also concerned about the implications the public meetings may have for the spread of the virus. These tenants need a rent freeze.

Read the letter [here](#).

COVID-19 Information for People with Diabetes

The American Diabetes Association is providing support and guidance to people impacted by diabetes, who are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. You can access helpful resources, understand your risk, know your legal rights, and connect with the community at diabetes.org/coronavirus. Make sure you know how to reduce your risk of contracting COVID-19 and what to do if you or a loved one develops symptoms. In addition, many people are now facing unexpected financial hardships. If you are struggling to pay for insulin, the ADA has resources to help - visit InsulinHelp.org. Questions? The American Diabetes Association is here to help during this challenging time: click here or call their Center for Information at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383).

NYCHA Rent Hardship Program Details

A household may qualify for a rent reduction based on rent hardship if all the following conditions are met:

- There is at least a 5% reduction to gross income
- Current rent is more than 30% of net household income

Residents can initiate an Interim Recertification via the NYCHA Self-Service Portal or by requesting a paper form to be mailed to their residence by calling respective Management Offices.

Loss of income examples include but are not limited to:

- Cut Hours

- Laid off
- Lowered business profits

If you are experiencing a loss in income, report this loss using an interim recertification immediately. You must include documentation verifying the income changes.

Contingent on the documents provided, your rent may be adjusted for the month following the submission of your interim. Any rent adjustment that does take place will be retroactive to the first of the month after you submitted your complete interim recertification (including verification documents). If it takes longer than a month for NYCHA staff to process your interim, you may not see a change in your rent immediately.

Complete loss of income: If you lost your job - you should report this loss using an interim recertification immediately. You must include documentation verifying that you lost your job.

Partial loss of income: If your hours were cut - you should report this loss using an interim recertification immediately. You must include documentation from your employer verifying that you lost income and that your income loss is expected to last at least two months. Such verification could include a written letter, an email, or phone call (oral verification).

Pay Your Rent Without Leaving Home: Did you know that NYCHA residents have several options to pay rent without leaving their apartments? These options include:

- Paying by phone
- E-payment
- Automatic deduction
- HRA payment for residents on public assistance

NYCHA offers eight ways to pay your rent virtually! Click [here](#) for more details.

Community Education Council 1 Parent Support Hotline

CEC 1 has launched a family support education text/ call hotline at (917) 830-7356. When you text and/or call and leave a message in your native language, a person will help direct you to the information you need ranging from education to food within 24 hours.

Remote Learning Devices Still Available

To help students stay connected during emergencies, the DOE is lending internet-enabled iPads to support remote learning for students. If you would like to request a device for a NYC student in your family, please fill out the form below. The DOE will use the contact information you provide to get in touch with you regarding the delivery of your device. In addition to the form below, you

must also sign the Student Device Agreement in order for your request to be processed. Priority will be given to students most in need, and all devices are granted on a temporary basis and will later need to be returned. There is a limit of one device per student. If you need to cancel a request, visit the request cancellation page. If you have applied for a device and still do not have one, please reach out to us to get assistance.

Fill out the request form [here](#).

Small Business Assistance

Start Small Think Big has small loans and grants available to struggling small businesses. Please reach out to them for assistance. [You can view the grants available here](#).

Free Legal Services

If you are experiencing legal problems related to your small business, non profit or personal matters, there are free legal services available to lower income New Yorkers. You can contact them by calling during work hours the following organizations:

For Legal Assistance:

- Manhattan Legal Services: 917-661-4500
- Legal Aid: 212-577-3300
- Mobilization for Justice: 212-417-3888

VOLS (Volunteers of Legal Services)

VOLS is involved in a number of different ways which you can see below. Or click the link:

<https://volsprobono.org/resourcesduringcovid19>

If you are not a VOLS client but are interested in receiving free legal services from VOLS, please contact us at the numbers listed below:

- Small businesses/ VOLS Microenterprise Project: (347) 521-5729
 - Seniors/ VOLS Elderly Project: (347) 521-5704
 - Older Veterans/ VOLS Veterans Initiative: (347) 521-5725
 - Immigrant Youth/ VOLS Immigration Project: (347) 521-5722
 - Unemployed Workers/ VOLS Unemployed Workers Project: 347-521-5735
 - Main VOLS Office: (212) 966-4400
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Our Growing Resource List

Our office has compiled a list of resources for constituents dealing with a variety of issues during this crisis that you can [view here](#), including:

- How to get free food, and food delivery ([here is a list of places that are open in the East Village!](#))
- Unemployment concerns
- Help with paying rent
- Educational resources
- Guidance for seniors
- Help for small business owners
- Mutual aid networks
- Ways to donate to others in need

We will continue to update it as more resources become available, or as information changes.

In the News

1. [NYC Comptroller Stringer and state pols demand more support for seniors during pandemic](#) - New York Daily News
2. [Advocates urge de Blasio, Cuomo to put homeless in unused hotels](#) - The Telegraph
3. [Not a Budget Anybody Should Be Celebrating](#) - Gotham Gazette