

Deer Park, NY — Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) held a forum and hearing today on college affordability at Deer Park High School. Students, parents and administrators submitted personal testimony on the skyrocketing cost of a college education and the challenges they've faced when paying for college and provided feedback to Congressman Israel as he prepares to draft college affordability legislation in Congress.

"I look at the issue of college affordability as a Congressman and as a father of two teenage daughters," said Congressman Israel. "A few years ago, I went through the college application process with my older daughter and was appalled to learn that one year at some private institutions can cost over \$45,000. No family should have to say to their child, you are smart enough for college, but we are not rich enough to send you. I'm thankful for the feedback that the students, parents and teachers at Deer Park have provided and I look forward to continuing to work with them as we address college affordability in Congress."

While the cost of a college education continues to increase at a rapid rate, the amount of aid has remained stagnant. There has been a 46 percent national hike in tuition and fees since 2001 at four-year public colleges. The total expenses for public universities now average \$15,566 and the total expenses for private universities now average \$31,916.

Congressman Israel is an original co-sponsor of the College Student Relief Act of 2007 (H.R.5), which passed the House of Representatives on January 17, 2007. This legislation cuts the interest rates in half for undergraduate students with subsidized loans over the next five years. He is also drafting two pieces of college affordability legislation: the Education Savings Accounts Expansion Act which builds upon tax-favored Coverdell education savings accounts by eliminating both the annual contribution limit and the income eligibility requirements and the Higher Education Tax Credit Expansion Act which provides for a \$3,000 tax credit to taxpayers who pay qualified education expenses, available for four years.

Joining Israel today were Deer Park School Board Trustee Dennis Ryan, High School Principal Nanine Cuttitta and Deer Park students, parents, teachers and guidance counselors.