

Testimony of Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk,  
Nominee for Chair and Commissioner of the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC)

New York City Council Rules Committee  
*City Hall – Committee Room*

February 3, 2020

Good morning. My name is Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk. I want to start by thanking Speaker Johnson, Chair Koslowitz, and members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to appear in front of you today and answer any questions you may have. I would also like to thank Mayor de Blasio for the honor of being nominated as Chair and Commissioner of the Taxi and Limousine Commission, and of course, Acting Commissioner Bill Heinzen and Chair Jacques Jiha for their steady leadership this past year at the helm of the Commission. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Deputy Mayor Anglin who gave me an opportunity to join her team at City Hall and who has been an incredible mentor and partner.

In my two decade long career in the private sector, higher education, philanthropy, and most recently in public service, I have always prided myself on being a compassionate problem solver. It is with that spirit that I have accepted this nomination and stand before you today.

I have had the honor of serving the City in several roles, including my current position as Chief of Staff to the Deputy Mayor for Operations. Before working at City Hall, I served as Chief of Staff to the Department of Education Central Operations, where I gained valuable experience managing a large scale organization. I was the second in command of an office that oversaw a \$2 billion dollar annual budget and a workforce of 10,000 employees.

In my current role, I oversee and coordinate 25 agencies and programs, including the Department of Transportation and the TLC. In this role, I have had the opportunity to observe how the TLC operates, and how transportation policy in the city as a whole is implemented. I have been involved with several recent, major policies, which we have advanced in partnership with this City Council, such as the City's for-hire vehicle (FHV) license cap and driver pay protections. I also played a role in advancing Vision Zero projects, the expansion of speed cameras and

innovative street redesigns like the 14th Street busway. I know working closely with the Council will be critical to helping drivers who are currently suffering.

On a personal note, I am a lifelong New Yorker, born and raised on the Upper West Side by two parents from the Dominican Republic. My parents, like so many drivers in this room and on the road today, came to New York City in search of the American dream. They are here today and I am grateful for their unconditional love and support. I am very lucky to have been born to them.

As a nominee for the Chair of the Commission, I feel an enormous responsibility, not only to the City of New York, but also to the drivers that the Commission is tasked with serving.

The taxi industry is currently in a state of crisis. The collapse of the medallion market sent shockwaves across the City. Many drivers are under extreme economic stress, with tragic results.

I want to take this moment to acknowledge and say the names of those drivers who took their lives during this crisis: Alfredo Perez, Danilo Corporan Castillo, Douglas Schifter, Nicanor Ochisor, Kenny Chow, Abdul Saleh, Fausto Luna, Roy Kim, and Lu Wu.

To those drivers, my apologies and condolences cannot undo the past, but I still offer them to the families of those who lost them to this crisis, and for those who are currently being pushed to the brink by financial debt. I am sorry. I want to promise you that, if confirmed, you will have an ally in the head of the TLC, one who will fight for drivers every day.

I love this city. And there are few things more emblematic of New York City than the yellow taxi and the hardworking, mostly immigrant, drivers who operate them. I simply cannot imagine a New York City without yellow cabs. Ensuring that our medallion drivers can thrive is undeniably paramount.

Last week, the Medallion Task Force, Co-Chaired by Council Members Ydanis Rodriguez and Steve Levin, released a comprehensive and insightful report with a number of important recommendations. This report could not have come at a more critical moment, and I hope to have the opportunity to work with the Council on these recommendations so that we not only solve the current crisis our drivers are facing, but also prevent a situation like this from ever happening again. In particular, my goal is to work with the Council and drivers to try to find a solution to

reduce driver monthly payments to less than \$1,000 a month, and I believe the City will need to play a role in this effort.

While working towards a solution to the medallion crisis would be my first priority, if confirmed as Commissioner, we also need a more holistic look at other for-hire transportation sectors that are undergoing change due to an ever-evolving industry, including the liveries and green cabs that provide vital service in areas outside of the Manhattan Central District. That is why I welcome Council Member Rodriguez's proposal for a Black Car and Livery Task Force to further examine the issues impacting these sectors.

The TLC is more than just the issuer of licenses -- the TLC is charged by the New York City Charter with developing "a broad public policy of transportation...including innovation and experimentation in relation to type and design of equipment, modes of service and manner of operation." This includes expanding wheelchair accessible vehicles, and ensuring the safety and fair treatment of passengers.

There is much more to be done to tackle accessibility in our fleet of taxis and FHV's. There simply are not enough accessible cars on the road to meet the demands of passengers. Wait times are far too high for those trying to obtain rides via FHV services, and vacant accessible yellow taxis are hard to find on the street. I know that the TLC has worked hard to advance this issue, and I look forward to continuing to expand on those policies as standards.

As we all know, discrimination is a real issue that many New Yorkers deal with on a daily basis. I believe most drivers are fair and impartial in their approach to passengers. However, I know that unfortunate interactions can occur. Over the years, members of this body have shared their own stories about not being picked up for rides or TLC licensed vehicles not being willing to take you to your destination. As someone who grew up on the Upper West Side long before it was considered pretty, I have been there too. It is something we need to tackle.

Thanks to legislation sponsored by Council Member Donovan Richards, the TLC formed the new Office of Inclusion, which has taken a good first step in addressing this issue. The work of this office is only the beginning, and I would be interested in working with the Council's Black, Latino/a, and Asian Caucus on its expansion.

The next TLC Commissioner also needs to have a forward-looking vision regarding the changes still to come in this industry. It is clear that the introduction of new technologies presents both opportunities and challenges for drivers and the riding public. When Uber and Lyft came into the marketplace and grew rapidly, the landscape changed significantly, with increased competition, congestion, and other changes to the market. So, as we help fix this crisis, and help the drivers currently struggling, we should try to anticipate further and unforeseen changes to the market. I would take a proactive approach in my potential role as Chair of the TLC to look ahead at emerging technologies and identify the appropriate policy and regulatory responses to these changes.

I strongly believe in the power of harnessing technology to help give a boost to our medallion taxis, a view that I know was shared by the Task Force. The report includes a number of recommendations on new technologies that could help improve the user experience in our yellow cabs by adapting to new technologies and thereby expanding the market of potential riders. Accordingly, if I am approved by the Council, I would conduct a top-to-bottom review of all TLC policies to ensure that they are adapted to the 21st Century, expand programs that test new technologies, and ensure that the voices of the drivers and industry are heard.

Lastly, I wanted to add that I do not want this job for the title or stature of being TLC Chair; those things have never driven me personally or over the course of my career, and they are not doing so now. I would like to do this job because I know that I can help both the drivers who are currently being crushed with economic hardship, and the passengers who rely on the services that TLC is charged with regulating. I believe I can offer passion, knowledge, experience, and a new set of skills to this position.

It would be an honor to be able to give back to this great city that has given me and my parents so much. I thank you for your consideration and will be happy to take any questions you may have for me.

To: New York City Council Rules Committee and other council members  
From: Taxis For All Campaign  
Re: Questions for TLC Chair Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk  
Date: February 2, 2020

Since 1996, the Taxis For All Campaign has worked to get accessible taxi and for-hire vehicles on New York City's streets. When we started, there weren't any accessible vehicles at all. Now, in large part due to a lawsuit we settled in 2013, there are thousands – though there's still major gaps in service. Over the years, we've at times worked closely with TLC chairs and, at other times, gone to court to convince them that all New Yorkers deserve a ride. We welcome Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk's nomination and hope we can work with her as we've worked with her predecessors in the de Blasio administration.

We have several questions we urge council members ask at today's hearing:

1. **Lag in fulfilling yellow taxi accessibility requirements:** In 2013, the City of New York settled a civil rights lawsuit with the Taxis For All Campaign that required 50% of all yellow taxis to be wheelchair-accessible by 2020 – in other words, this year. However, the latest report the plaintiffs have received indicates that the number of wheelchair-accessible vehicles is about 30% and is unlikely to meet the 50% requirement by the end of the year.

- What specific proposals do you have to bridge this gap and get closer to the 50% requirement this year?
- Are there incentives that you are hoping to explore to get more drivers to put an accessible vehicle on the road? What are they?
- Would you consider linking the bail-out proposals to an accessibility requirement, making a transition to an accessible vehicle a condition of a bail-out?

**For-hire vehicle accessible performance:** Uber, Lyft, Via and other e-hail services now are required to supply a modest amount of accessible service. Uber and Lyft convinced City Hall to water down tougher TLC rules, then fought the requirements in court. In September 2019, the TLC reviewed FHV accessible performance (see [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/fhv\\_wheelchair\\_accessibility\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/fhv_wheelchair_accessibility_report_2019.pdf).)

- In the report, the TLC showed that, about 25% of the time, Uber, Lyft and Via took between 15 and 30 minutes to respond to a request for an accessible ride. Do you consider that acceptable, and what would you do to improve their performance?
- The report also showed that Uber did not complete about 1 in 20 accessible-vehicle requests at all. Do you consider this acceptable? What would you do to improve Uber's performance?

- If Uber, Lyft, Via and other companies do not meet the TLC's requirements, what actions would you take? Would you consider denying them their license to operate?
2. **Lack of accessible service offered by local livery companies:** Neighborhood car services also must supply accessible service, according to long-standing TLC rules and current regulations. But our members report and TLC data show that accessible service is not reliably available.
    - How do you propose to change this so accessible service is available to local car-service customers?
  3. **100% accessibility:** In a recent meeting with the Taxis For All Campaign, you suggested that your ultimate goal would be to make 100% of the fleets accessible, which we support. What ideas do you have to achieve this goal?
  4. **On-demand Access-A-Ride program:** MTA New York City Transit started an innovative program that offers 1,200 Access-A-Ride riders the opportunity to get a ride without reserving one a day in advance. Participants call the on-demand program "life-changing" and, although they have concerns about reimbursement, drivers also hail the program.

Unfortunately, the MTA now has proposed major cutbacks in the pilot starting this year, limiting riders to just 16 rides (eight round trips) a month, with a \$15 limit on the cost of the trip.

- Do you support the concept on on-demand Access-A-Ride service?
  - How will you work with the MTA to save the program and, eventually, expand it as a way of providing better service for our community and getting more business for drivers?
5. **Driver reimbursement and Access-A-Ride programs:** In a recent meeting with the TLC, officials told representatives of the disability community that taxi drivers are refusing to participate in the MTA's on-demand and other taxi-based programs because they do not get paid enough for the trips.
    - While New York City Transit determines the payments, what role do you think the TLC can play in protecting drivers and making sure these programs, so vital to our community, succeed?

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Taxis For All Campaign members include Bronx Independent Living Services • Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled • Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York • Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York • Disabilities Network of New York City • Harlem Independent Living Center • United Spinal Association • 504 Democratic Club

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in favor  in opposition

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Edith Prentiss

Address: Taxis For All 739 W 188 St 4E

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Mohamed Tipu Sultan

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: New York Taxi Worker Alliance

Address: 31-10 37 Ave Suite 300 LIC

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Name: Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Nominee

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: CIRA Angeles (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Livery Base Owners

Address: 1642 St Nicholas Ave NY NY

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Name: SAIBOU SIDIBE

Address: 31-10 37 Ave Suite 300

I represent: New York Taxi Workers Assn

Address: 31-10 37 Ave Suite 300 L.I.C.

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Name: Zubin Solimany

Address: 31-10 37th Ave #300 LIC, NY 11101

I represent: New York Taxi Workers Alliance

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/13/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bhairavi Desai

Address: 31-10 37th Ave #300 LIC, NY 11101

I represent: New York Taxi Workers Alliance

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