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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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October 13, 2023
Start: 10:05 A.M.
Recess: 1:07 P.M.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Selvena N. Brooks-Powers,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Joann Ariola
- Daid M. Carr
- Amanda Farias
- Ari Kagan
- Linda Lee
- Farah N. Louis
- Mercedes Narcisse
- Lincoln Restler
- Carlina Rivera
- Nantasha M. Williams
- Julie Won
- Kalman Yeger
- Shekar Krishnan

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INFRASTRUCTURE

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Ryan Wanttaja
First Deputy Commissioner of the New York
City Taxi and Limousine Commission

Ed Wilton
TLC's Deputy Commissioner for Finance

Jean Ryan
Taxis for All and Disabled in Action

Cara Liebowitz
Brooklyn Center for Independence of the
Disabled

Bhairavi Desai
New York Taxi Workers Alliance

Pat Gatling
International Association of Transportation
Regulators

Maureen Regan
NYS Society of Physicians Assistants

Walter Hurdle
Uber and Lyft Drivers

Alli Langley
New York Taxi Workers Alliance

Michael Pollard
Play Octopus

Chayanga Sherpa

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Bunmi Olowoyeye

Tidiane Dialio

Suves Bairagi

Bamba Diakite

MD Khayrul Islam

Joseph Dim

Tamer Rashdan

Bassirou Zebret

Ibrahim Zoure

Mohammed Mohiuddin

Darcia Sangpo

Alexander Kuromchenko

Richard Chow

Kere Jolissa

Mohammad Alvi

Naider Henry

Saifu Hoque

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Mohammed Hoque

Wain Chin

MD Azizul Haque

MD Golam Kibria

Saif Aizah

Yang Weng

Gobin Sunar

Tul Prasad Sunar

Zoundi Noel Sinaplice

Mudasiru Kamil

Ivan E. Garcia

Edwin Garcia

Joseph Bamba

Mohosin Chowdhury

Raj B. Khatri

Marouna Chernob

Malang Gassama

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Basi M. Khareef

Yeldar Mukhtaruly

Haitham Irqibat

Christopher Leon Johnson

Raul Rivera

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Good morning
4 and welcome to the New York City Hybrid Hearing on
5 the Committee on Transportation. Please silence all
6 electronic devices. If you have not yet filled out
7 one of these witness slips, please do so and give to
8 us, the Sergeant at Arms.

9 At no time, please do not approach the dais. If
10 you have any questions, kindly raise your hand and we
11 will assist you. Thank you so much for your kind
12 cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Good morning and
14 welcome to the Oversight Hearing of the Committee on
15 Transportation and Infrastructure. I am Selvena
16 Brooks-Powers, Chair for this Committee.

17 Today, we will focusing on the State of the taxi
18 and for-hire vehicle industries in our city to better
19 understand the issues drivers in these industries are
20 facing. In addition, the Committee will hear
21 Introduction Numbers 1079, sponsored by Council
22 Member Shekar Krishnan in relation to taxicab driver
23 pay for electronically dispatched taxicab trips.

24 Intro. Number 1139, sponsored by Council Member
25 Amanda Farias, in relation to advertising on the
interior of for-hire vehicles. Intro. Number 1191,

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3 sponsored by me, in relation to taxicab license
4 durations. And Intro. Number 1192, also sponsored by
5 me in relation to authorizing physician assistants
6 and nurse practitioners to conduct medical exams of
7 taxi driver license applicants.

8 Over the last decade, the taxi and for-hire
9 vehicle industry has experienced tremendous change.
10 Particularly since the Introduction of app-based for-
11 hire vehicles in the city. This new technology
12 combined with the devastating effects of the COVID-19
13 pandemic, fundamentally altered industry dynamics.
14 In the wake of the pandemic, taxi and for-hire
15 vehicle ridership has increased and owners are taking
16 their vehicles out of storage to meet increasing
17 demand.

18 The Council is committed to removing barriers
19 that prevent driver's from earning a livable wage
20 while they provide essential services to New Yorkers.
21 Today, we will hear from drivers and advocates across
22 all industries as well as the TLC about what action
23 may be necessary to keep the taxi and for-hire
24 vehicle industry moving in a positive direction. No
25 driver should be left behind.

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3 In the course of today's hearing, I hope to
4 receive updates on a number of policies and programs
5 overseen by TLC or otherwise effecting the industry.
6 First, I would like to hear from TLC and from
7 driver's about the impact of congestion pricing on
8 the taxi industry.

9 I know tht taxi medallion owners and for-hire
10 vehicle drivers have voiced concerns about the
11 imposition of additional tolls under the MTA's
12 tolling scheme. One MTA estimate suggested that
13 demand the taxis and for-hire vehicles in the central
14 business district could decline by as much as 17
15 percent once congestion pricing is implemented.

16 Just last week, after a meeting of the Traffic
17 Mobility Review Board, the Chairman of the Board
18 stated that taxis and for-hire vehicle tolls will
19 likely be passed onto the customer. And further
20 suggest that taxis and for-hire vehicles be charged a
21 toll per ride.

22 I have concerns about the impact of tolling on
23 drivers and I am interesting in hearing from drivers
24 and the TLC about these proposals. I want to discuss
25 the programs set up to mitigate the debt burden faced
by taxi medallion owners, including the Medallion

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2 Relief Program and the Medallion Relief Program Plus.

3 The MRP program has allowed small medallion owners
4 struggling with debt to work with lenders in order to
5 restructure their loans, reduce principle amounts,
6 and lower their monthly payments. It provides
7 medallion owners a 20,000 grant to help restructure
8 medallion related loans up to \$9,000 in monthly debt
9 payment assistance.

10 In addition, the MRP Plus program has allowed for
11 a \$30,000 grant for medallion owners to help
12 restructure medallion related loans with the
13 remaining principle balance of \$170,000 or less. We
14 are interested in the state of this programs and in
15 understanding how many drivers received assistance
16 from MRP and MRP plus since their inception.

17 I'd like to understand the impact of the TLC's
18 pilot program to reissue 2,500 unused permits for
19 street-hail liveries, also known as green taxis.
20 Unlike green and yellow taxis liveries permitted
21 under the pilot program are not required to post a
22 rate card, use a partition, have an in-vehicle camera
23 system, install a meter or include rooftop lights.

24 This relief is intended to make operating a
25 livery more cost effective for drivers. But the

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1 expansion of the green taxis has remained a contested
2 issue. As it adds more competition for existing
3 drivers. We are interested in the status of the
4 pilot, whether it has increased outer borough
5 service, and what effect it has had on the income of
6 drivers overall.
7

8 It is also important to understand the state of
9 the medallion and licensed bridge programs and the
10 number of medallions and licenses now in storage as
11 the industry recovers from the pandemic. Temporary
12 medallion storage has provided medallion owners a way
13 to avoid paying insurance costs, especially when
14 costs increase and demands go down. The number of
15 medallions in storage was at an all time high of
16 7,364 in April of 2021. What is that number today?
17 And how many active yellow taxis are now in city
18 streets, on city streets?

19 Likewise, TLC allowed for-hire vehicle license
20 holders to temporarily place their licenses in
21 storage in order to give relief to drivers. That
22 temporary program has ended, though it has been
23 replaced by a new program. We are interested in how
24 many licenses remained in storage at the end of the
25

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1 initial program and how many have been stored as part
2 of the new program.
3

4 Next, I want to discuss UBER's partnership with
5 yellow taxis announced last year. Under the
6 partnership, yellow taxis can accept fares through
7 Uber based on the apps pricing and policies. I am
8 interested in the number of e-hails yellow taxis have
9 accepted through this partnership and how much money
10 has been collected on average on such trips.

11 Finally, I am interested in an update on TLC's
12 failure to make half of yellow taxis wheelchair
13 accessible as it is required to do under our 2013
14 class action settlement. Despite facing a June 30th
15 deadline to comply with that settlement. Far less
16 than 50 percent of yellow taxis are currently
17 equipped for wheelchair or motorized scooter users.
18 I want to focus on what TLC is doing to meet its
19 legal obligations.

20 We will begin with testimony from the TLC but
21 before we do so, I would like to thank my Committee
22 Staff, my staff and my Committee staff as well for
23 their hard work Mark Chen, Counsel to the Committee,
24 Kevin Kotowski, Senior Policy Analyst, John Basile,
25 Senior Policy Analyst, Michael Sherman, Senior

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3 Financial Analyst, Jack Siegenthaler, my Policy and
4 Budget Director and Rene Taylor my Chief of Staff.

5 I also want to take a moment to recognize Samuel
6 Breidbart, Counsel to the Committee. Today is
7 unfortunately Sam's last day as Counsel to our
8 Committee. We are sad to lose him. He has helped us
9 with this Committees work with passion and intellect
10 and he has demonstrated his commitment to making our
11 transportation network more equitable. He has played
12 a critical role in our oversight of the city's
13 streets, airports, subways, taxis and for-hire
14 vehicles and so much more. He has negotiated a
15 number of bills that improve the safety and
16 functioning of the city's transportation network.

17 For example, implementing daylight in
18 intersections, identifying off street parking for
19 tractor trailers, and ensuring safety near senior
20 centers. Moreover, he has always brought to work his
21 good humor, sharp insight and generosity of spirit.
22 We will miss him and we wish him the best as he takes
23 on a new challenge at the Brennan Center for Justice.

24 Sam, I just want to thank you for the guidance
25 and the support that you have provided me from your

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1
2 very first day as Counsel to our Committee and I
3 thank you for your friendship.

4 SAMUEL BREIDBART: Thank you.

5 [APPLAUSE]

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm very sad about
7 this, so I'm going through the motions and I'll now
8 ask Council Member Farias to give an opening
9 statement on her legislation being heard today.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you Chair Brooks-
11 Powers and sorry to see you go Sam but we're excited
12 for your new endeavor. Good morning everyone. I'm
13 Council Member Amanda Farias and I'm proud to be
14 attending today's hearing to discuss TLC's regulated
15 industries and to hear my bill Intro. 1139, which
16 would allow for interior advertising for for-hire
17 vehicles. This new average has the opportunity,
18 which is not a new idea to the city, would provide
19 rideshare drivers with an opportunity to earn a
20 passive income from advertisements that could allow
21 for more money to stay in their pockets and in the
22 families of our hardworking driver's.

23 This bill puts New York City rideshare drivers
24 first. The ability for drivers specifically that
25 service our outer borough communities, to have

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2 average advertisements in their cars, comes at an
3 urgent moment. With more fees incoming to our
4 drivers in communities like mine, due to rising gas
5 prices, calls to electrify, congestion pricing and
6 the upcoming Green Rides Initiative. The revenue
7 sharing model outlined within this bill will allow
8 drivers to truly reap the benefits of an add revenue
9 as they will earn a percentage of every add that
10 plays on the tablets with little to no extra work for
11 them during their shifts.

12 It has also been shown that when consumers are
13 presented with a visible reminder to tip their driver
14 on an in car, infotainment screens, drivers see a 13
15 percent increase in the tips received.

16 As the Chair of the Committee on Economic
17 Development and the Council Member for a huge portion
18 of our rideshare drivers, I am proud to be pushing
19 for this bill that supports our workers and their
20 economic mobility. Thank you Chair Brooks-Powers for
21 your leadership on hearing this bill today.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'd also
23 like to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council
24 Members Lee and Kagan.

25

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3 Next, I will ask our Committee Counsel to go over
4 some procedural items and swear in the
5 representatives from TLC.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Chair. I'm
7 Sam Breidbart, Counsel to the Transportation and
8 Infrastructure Committee of the New York City
9 Council. Our first witnesses will be from the Taxi
10 and Limousine Commission. First Deputy Commissioner
11 Ryan Wanttaja and Deputy Commissioner for Finance,
12 Edward Wilton.

13 I will now administer the oath. Please raise
14 your right hands. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
15 the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
16 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
17 questions?

18 RYAN WANTTAJA: I do.

19 EDWARD WILTON: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin when ready.

21 RYAN WANTTAJA: Good morning Chair Brooks-Powers
22 and members of the Transportation and Infrastructure
23 Committee and congrats to Sam. It's an honor and a
24 privilege to be here for your last hearing. Than you
25 for all your hard work helping navigate this
Committee.

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3 I am Ryan Wanttaja, First Deputy Commissioner of
4 the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission.
5 With me today is TLC's Deputy Commissioner for
6 Finance, Ed Wilton. Commissioner Do sends his
7 regrets that he could not be here today, but we thank
8 you for inviting us to provide an update on TLC's
9 regulated industries and talk about the four bills on
10 the agenda.

11 TLC's regulated industries have certainly faced
12 significant challenges in the past few years, with
13 the COVID-19 pandemic drastically reducing trip
14 volumes for all sectors. The for-hire industry
15 slowly but surely continues to bounce back from its
16 low point in April of 2020. There are now about 24
17 million trips in TLC-licensed vehicles each month,
18 about 80 percent of what it was just before the
19 pandemic. While high-volume trips dispatched by Lyft
20 and Uber are over 90 percent of their pre-pandemic
21 levels, taxi trips and trips dispatched by other FHV
22 bases have remained 50-60 percent of their 2019
23 levels since 2021.

24 Notably though, there is some promising data for
25 yellow taxis that suggest a more positive story than
trip numbers alone would indicate. The number of

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2 taxis on the road, taxi drivers performing trips, and
3 medallions out of storage are all trending in the
4 right direction, with nearly every month breaking the
5 post-pandemic record for taxi industry activity. For
6 example, the 8,400 taxis now performing trips each
7 month are almost double the number that was on the
8 road in 2021. Most importantly, the industry's
9 financial health appears to be better than it has in
10 years. Due to TLC's increase in the metered rate of
11 fare in December of last year, the first increase in
12 over ten years, drivers are making more money per
13 trip.

14 These increased financial incentives help the
15 industry attract drivers and 6499ultimately provide
16 better service to New Yorkers. Total farebox revenue
17 for the taxi industry is now about \$2.8 million per
18 day, a 22 percent increase from last year. On top of
19 increased revenue from the taxi fare box, the city's
20 Medallion Relief Program has already provided about
21 1,900 medallion owners, a combined total of almost
22 \$450 million in loan forgiveness.

23 I do want to note as well that while commuter van
24 data is more limited, this important sector has also
25 grown in the past year, with five more commuter vans

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2 in service now than earlier this year, this is the
3 first time we have seen an expansion of licensed
4 commuter van industry since before the pandemic.

5 And I cannot mention vans without discussing
6 TLC's new mobile outreach van. Better known as Van
7 Hailen, it takes many of the services our Long Island
8 City facility provides, including licensing
9 inquiries, drug testing and settlement processing,
10 and brings them directly to the drivers. As of
11 today, TLC has partnered with elected officials to
12 bring Van Hailen to seven neighborhoods across all
13 five boroughs, providing service for 594 licensees.
14 We brought Van Hailen with us to City Hall today, so
15 if there are any drivers here, I would encourage you
16 to stop by on your way out. And if any Council
17 Members are interested in hosting the Van in your
18 district, please let us know.

19 Before I discuss the Intro.'s on the agenda, I
20 would like to address two major developments
21 impacting the for-hire transportation industry. The
22 MTA's congestion pricing program and TLC's Green Ride
23 initiative. The four congestion pricing scenarios
24 proposed by MTA's Traffic Mobility Review Board are a
25 step in the right direction toward reducing the

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3 financial burden on TLC regulated drivers. But there
4 is more that can be done to help drivers in the
5 industry in its post-pandemic recovery, and we need
6 to consider the economic needs of these drivers in
7 order to get congestion pricing right. We thank the
8 Traffic Mobility Review Board for its sensible
9 approach to the industry and its potential plans and
10 we have confidence in our appointee, John Samuelson,
11 as the process continues.

12 As you may be aware, TLC will vote on our Green
13 Rides initiative next Wednesday, October 18th. Under
14 the rules, TLC will require High-Volume For-Hire
15 Services, Uber and Lyft, to dispatch exclusively to
16 wheelchair accessible vehicles or zero emissions
17 vehicles by 2030. TLC is committed to a greener and
18 more accessible fleet, and we are excited to put
19 forward an initiative that accomplishes both goals.
20 At a September 20th public hearing on the proposal,
21 we heard overwhelming support for the goals of the
22 program from drivers, companies, economists, and
23 environmental advocates. We did, however, hear a few
24 recurring concerns about the availability of charging
25 infrastructure and about the affordability of EVs.
It is important to remember that the 100 percent EV

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3 or WAV requirement does not arrive until 2030. The
4 first benchmark is just five percent of trips that
5 must be dispatched to EVs or WAVs by the end of 2024.
6 In the first year of the initiative, 95 percent of
7 trips can still be dispatched to any vehicle, so not
8 every driver needs to convert to an EV or WAV today.
9 TLC designed the benchmarks to increase as both
10 charging infrastructure and electric vehicles become
11 more readily available and affordable, scaling up
12 more rapidly in later years and more charging
13 infrastructure is expected to be in place. And when
14 EVs are expected to cost the same as or less than gas
15 powered vehicles. However, should the development of
16 charging infrastructure or vehicle price parity lag
17 behind expectations, TLC can revisit the percentage
18 requirements at that time.

19 But again, I would emphasize the response to the
20 Green Rides proposal was overwhelmingly positive. We
21 all want a greener, more accessible fleet and we look
22 forward to working with drivers, the companies, and
23 the City Council to make this initiative a success.

24 Moving on the four bills on the agenda, TLC
25 supports Intro. 1191, which clarifies that the term
of a taxi license is two years, not one year and

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1
2 Intro. 1192, which allows physician assistants and
3 nurse practitioners to conduct medical exams for
4 license applicants. These are both commonsense bills
5 that will provide clarity for the taxi industry and
6 more options for our drivers, and we thank the
7 Council for their work on theses proposals.

8 TLC does, however, have concerns about Intro.
9 1139 and Intro. 1079. Intro. 1139 would allow
10 interior advertising in for-hire vehicles. While
11 well intended as a way to provide drivers with
12 supplemental income, TLC is skeptical of how much
13 drivers will gain from this change and is concerned
14 that the downsides outweigh any potential benefit.
15 TLC currently prohibits interior advertising in FHV's
16 for a variety of reasons. We know from complaints we
17 receive about advertisements in taxis that many
18 drivers and passengers find the volume and
19 repetitiveness of these ads incredibly annoying.
20 Additionally, the city has limited authority to
21 regulate the content of advertisements. So, if ads
22 are allowed in FHV's, passengers may be shown, and
23 drivers may hear, ads for anything, from Broadway
24 musicals to strip clubs.

25

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1 Perhaps these concerns could be overcome if
2 drivers stood to earn significantly more money by
3 allowing ads, but TLC has yet to see any such
4 evidence. On the taxi side, most advertisers enter
5 into agreements with fleets and drivers do not share
6 in the revenues. We expect a similar business model
7 to emerge in FHV, which may explain why it is the
8 large advertising and FHV companies that seem most
9 interested in allowing interior advertising. We have
10 heard countless claims that interior advertising will
11 result in increased driver earnings but we have yet
12 to see proof that such an increase would materialize
13 in any meaningful way and would be guaranteed to
14 drivers in the long term, rather than the companies
15 just offering attractive up-front incentives to get
16 drivers in the door and then reducing those
17 incentives over time, as we have seen in the for-hire
18 industry before.

19
20 I will also note that the Council established
21 Black Car and Livery Task Force recommended as
22 recently as 2021 that TLC maintain existing
23 restrictions on interior advertising. Citing many of
24 the reasons I just discussed, the Task Force stated
25 that allowing such ads would be detrimental to their

1 business and would not accrue any benefit to drivers.

2 We understand and appreciate the Council's intent
3 with Intro. 1139 but we agree with the Task Force and
4 do not believe driver earnings are best addressed by
5 putting more ads into more spaces.
6

7 Turning to 1079, this bill would require that for
8 any yellow taxi trip resulting from an e-hail, the e-
9 hail app, if it charges the passenger a fare other
10 than the metered rate must pay the driver an amount
11 at least equal to what the driver would have received
12 had the trips fare been calculated by the meter. As
13 background in 2018, TLC launched the Flex Fare Pilot
14 Program, which allows TLC-licensed e-hail apps to
15 offer passengers an upfront binding fare quote,
16 similar to what passengers enjoy in the FHV sector.

17 Last month, TLC issued its Pilot Evaluation
18 Report, finding among other things, that driver
19 revenue per mile on metered versus non-metered trips
20 is roughly the same but because e-hail trips tend to
21 be longer than street hail trips, e-hail trips are
22 typically more profitable for drivers.

23 Intro. 1079, while intending to ensure that taxi
24 drivers have income protection on non-metered trips,
25 may undermine a program that provides taxi drivers

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1 with additional trips that already pay drivers about
2 the same per mile as street hails. Any e-hail app
3 required to run the taximeter on a trip where the
4 passenger is given non-metered, upfront fare quote
5 would likely stop offering these upfront fares, as it
6 would be nearly impossible for an e-hail app to offer
7 the certainty of an upfront price to passengers while
8 at the same time using the meter for purposes of
9 driver pay. As I mentioned earlier, while data on
10 revenue, active vehicles, and active drivers are all
11 trending in the right direction, trips continue to be
12 well below pre-pandemic levels. We are concerned
13 that Intro. 1079 would impose a requirement that
14 would potentially limit taxi trip options for both
15 passengers and drivers.
16

17 Thank you again for inviting me to provide an
18 update on TLC-regulated industries and address recent
19 developments related to these industries. We look
20 forward to continuing the work with Council to ensure
21 that New Yorkers can continue to rely on the city's
22 for-hire industry. I am now happy to answer any
23 questions you may have.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you and thank
25 you for sending your testimony early. I really

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1 appreciate it. It gives Committee Staff an
2 opportunity to see it a head of time and be prepared.
3 I also want to acknowledge that we've been joined by
4 Councilwoman Ariola who is on line. We also have
5 been joined by Council Member Carr.
6

7 So, let's start with the TLC Owner Driver
8 Resource Center. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the
9 TLC created the TLC Owner Driver Resource Center to
10 offer additional support to drivers and owners. The
11 Center offers professional, financial and legal
12 guidance to TLC licenses. Largely in relation to
13 their debt situation, brokerage, loan finance
14 agreements, and purchase or refinancing of their
15 medallion and other debts. In addition, the Center
16 provides services related to driver protection,
17 health and wellness and public benefits application
18 support. Since its inception, how many clients has
19 the TLC Owner Driver Resource Center helped?

20 RYAN WANTTAJA: I'm sorry Chair, I don't have
21 that number in front of me. I would be happy to give
22 that you following this year.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Would somebody be
24 able to get it while we're going through the
25 questions?

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3 RYAN WANTTAJA: Uhm, we could certainly reach out
4 to our team and ask.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Since its
6 inception, how has the Center transitioned back into
7 helping clients in person versus remote? Where is
8 the in-person center located and is there still an
9 option for remote appointments?

10 RYAN WANTTAJA: Thank you Chair for the question.
11 We absolutely are open for both in-person and remote
12 appointments. Our in-person location is at the TLC's
13 Long Island City Licensing Facility. We are, I
14 believe, expanding the physical premises now to allow
15 for more in-person hearings. Not hearings but more
16 in-person appointments. We know a lot of drivers are
17 coming through our Long Island City facility for
18 their licensing issues. So, it's great to have that
19 in-person option for when they're there.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Great. Uhm, in terms
21 of the Taxi Medallion Owner Relief Program, the TLC
22 Owner Driver Resource Center assists in the
23 administration of the Taxi Medallion Owner Relief
24 Program or MRP and the Loan Guaranteed Program or
25 MRP+. The programs both provide debt relief for
eligible medallion owners with financial assistance

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1 and free legal representation to help medallion
2 owners negotiate with lenders to reduce loan balances
3 and lower monthly payments. The programs are open to
4 medallion owners with six or fewer medallions. The
5 MRP provides a \$20,000 grant to help restructure
6 medallion related loans. Up to \$9,000 in monthly
7 payment assistance and free legal support and
8 representation.
9

10 The MRP+ provides a \$30,000 grant to help
11 restructure medallion related loans with a remaining
12 principle balance of \$170,000 or less. Loan
13 guaranteed for lenders and freely who support in
14 representation. Since its inception, how much money
15 has been provided to owners in the MRP and MRP+?

16 RYAN WANTTAGJA: Thank you for that question. I
17 believe Deputy Commissioner Wilton has the updated
18 numbers on the debt relief.

19 EDWARD WILTON: Uhm, so as if this morning, we
20 have excuse me, we have seen \$445 million of debt
21 relief provided through both programs. \$58 million
22 was from MRP and \$387 million resulted from MRP+.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And 2022 and year to
24 date, how does the current year to date number
25 compare to previous years?

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2 RYAN WANTTAJA: So, I mean the number is
3 constantly going up. I don't have the exact specific
4 number for the end of FY22. We can get that for you
5 probably before the end of the hearing.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Since its
7 inception, how many owners have applied for the debt
8 relief 2022 and year to date and how does the current
9 year to date number compare to previous years?

10 RYAN WANTTAJA: So, as of right now, there's 1879
11 owners for a total of 2250 medallions. The program
12 was - so I don't have the specifics on FY22 end of
13 year numbers but the program had just started, so it
14 was very low at the end of FY22. The vast majority
15 of these have been inside of FY23. All these numbers
16 we can provide to you after the hearing though.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: It would be great if
18 while we're in the hearing, someone could be working
19 on getting that information. It is helpful when the
20 agencies come with the data that we're looking for.

21 Since its inception, how many owners have applied
22 for debt relief?

23 RYAN WANTTAJA: 2001.
24
25

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And how does the
4 current year to date number compare to previous
5 years?

6 RYAN WANTTAJA: We'll have to get back to you on
7 that.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Has the program been
9 streamlined? So, as to fulfill applicants needs more
10 efficiently since the start of the program?

11 RYAN WANTTAJA: Absolutely, as the program has
12 been moving on through FY23, we have sort of
13 perfected the process of prescreening drivers for
14 eligibility, so that when it is time for them to move
15 forward with the refinancing options, we could do so
16 in an expeditious manner.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What is the current
18 wait time for the relief?

19 RYAN WANTTAJA: I don't have the exact number on
20 that. I would have to look at the numbers but it
21 does take minimum of I'd say 12 weeks for application
22 processing to the refinancing. But it is about a
23 fiscal quarter for all the financials to sort of work
24 their way through the process.

25 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yeah, also I'd like
to take a moment to acknowledge we've been joined by

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1 Council Member Louis. How many taxi medallion
2 foreclosures occurred in 2022 and year to date?

3 RYAN WANTTAJA: So, I know that -

4 EDWARD WILTON: So, the foreclosure number is a
5 little bit hard to determine. There are a handful of
6 loans that are delinquent drivers sometimes become
7 current on those loans. Some go into default so we
8 have, I believe we have the delinquent rate and we've
9 got the - do we have the foreclosure number?
10

11 RYAN WANTTAJA: We have a 16 percent delinquent
12 rate over 90 days and then a 21 percent rate for just
13 delinquent in general. So, 16 percent of that over
14 90 days, 21 percent delinquent overall. So, that's
15 roughly, it's about 400.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You said roughly?

17 RYAN WANTTAJA: 400.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: For Hire Vehicle
19 Licensed Storage Program. In 2020, the TLC created a
20 COVID-19 For-Hire Vehicle Licensed Storage Program to
21 provide relief to vehicle licensed holders who could
22 not afford to retain or repair their vehicles during
23 the pandemic. The program ended on August 31st of
24 this year. For-hire vehicle licensed holders were
25 notified multiple times and the were required to be

1 taken out of storage by the end date of the program.

2 In an effort to help owners, the TLC created a new
3 short-term storage program for for-hire vehicles
4 licensees, called the Short-Term FHV Licensed Storage
5 Program. The new program allows active FHV licensees
6 to put their for-hire vehicle license in storage once
7 during every two-year licensed term for up to 90
8 days.

9
10 While in storage, the TLC will not enforce in
11 insurance or inspection requirement. As the end of
12 the COVID-19 For-Hire Vehicle Licensed Program, how
13 many licenses were still in storage?

14 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you Chair. As of last
15 week, we still have 2,684 FHV licenses that are still
16 in storage. Many of these are coming out. We are
17 processing them as quickly as we can.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And what happened to
19 these licenses?

20 EDWARD WILTON: Uh, many of the licenses came out
21 of storage and were attached to new vehicles. So,
22 we're seeing that as the industry is recovered, FHV
23 owners are finding it to be a financially good
24 proposition to take their license out of storage and
25 attach it to a vehicle. We have seen some that have

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3 just failed to renew. Uhm but the bulk of these are
4 coming out of storage and are getting back on the
5 road.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, the question was
7 for the old program. Hmm, hmm.

8 EDWARD WILTON: Oh, for the old program?

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes.

10 EDWARD WILTON: These are still the numbers for
11 the old program. The new program doesn't take effect
12 until the end of October. So, we're still processing
13 the licenses that are coming out of storage from the
14 old program.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. And what were
16 the total cost of fines and violation fees for these
17 licenses that were left in storage past the due date
18 of the programs ending?

19 EDWARD WILTON: Uhm, I don't believe there were
20 any fines that were attached to leaving them in the
21 program. If a license holder did not take their
22 license out of storage, they simply forfeited their
23 license, if they didn't reactivate it. We do have -
24 these 2,684 though I believe are owners who are in
25 the process of taking their license out of storage

1
2 and putting it on a vehicle and obtaining the
3 insurance for it.

4 I'm certainly happy to confirm that with our
5 licensing department to ensure that there's not any
6 additional fines.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And can you confirm
8 whether or not there any forfeited licenses?

9 EDWARD WILTON: Absolutely, I can get you the
10 number of forfeited licenses, yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And what's going to
12 happen with the forfeited licenses? Are they going
13 to be reissued or?

14 EDWARD WILTON: So, we currently have a pause on
15 issuing new for-hire vehicle licenses with the
16 exception for wheelchair accessible vehicle licenses.
17 One of the reasons why we wanted to end this sort of
18 at hawk storage program, we stood up during the
19 pandemic, was to really understand the universe of
20 active licenses out there as we understood, as we
21 evaluated if and how many more licenses to issue in
22 the future.

23 So, there are plans to issue a one for one new
24 FHE license but it certainly goes into our evaluation
25 of having new licenses to issue in the future.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Moving on to Uber and
4 taxi. In spring 2022, Uber announced the partnership
5 with yellow taxis dispatched through the app. Now, a
6 little over a year and a half into this partnership,
7 how is the program going?

8 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. It
9 seems to be going well. Passengers and drivers both
10 appreciate the extra flexibility of the Flex Fare
11 trips. They're dispatched through the Uber app.
12 It's my understanding that Uber has partnered with
13 two of our pilot participants, our two E-hail apps,
14 Curb and Arrow to offer taxis on the platform. I
15 know the rollout was small so this is not a
16 significant trip volume for taxis but in a time when
17 trips are still over taxis, any additional taxi trips
18 are beneficial to our industry.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What analysis has
20 been done to understand the impact of this program?

21 EDWARD WILTON: Certainly, so this - Uber offered
22 these taxi trips as part of our Flex Fare Pilot
23 Program. We just this month, released our pilot
24 evaluation report and I mentioned earlier the data
25 surrounding that shows the drivers that are receiving
these flat fare trips through Curb, through Arrow,

1
2 through Uber are making roughly the same on a per
3 mile basis and actually these trips tend to pay
4 drivers more because they are longer than normal
5 street hailed trips.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Moving on
7 to accessibility. I probably will come back a few
8 more times on uber and taxi but in terms of
9 accessibility and the report in the city from last
10 month, it was revealed that TLC failed to meet its
11 June 30th deadline under our 2013 class action
12 settlement to ensure that 50 percent all medallion
13 cabs are accessible.

14 It missed this deadline despite a two-year
15 suspension – excuse me, extension to meet it.
16 Currently, just 32 percent of the entire fleet
17 accessible to people in wheelchairs or motorized
18 scooters. What is TLC doing to bring that number up
19 to 50 percent?

20 EDWARD WILTON: Sure, thank you for the question.
21 This is the subject of ongoing federal litigation.
22 We are in active settlement discussions now as part
23 of that litigation, so there's not a lot I can
24 discuss here but I can say that we are affirmatively
25 meeting with the plaintiffs to chart a path forward

1
2 on this and the TLC is doing everything under our
3 power to increase the number of wheelchair accessible
4 vehicles across all of our sectors, including taxis.

5 On the taxi specific side, we have recently
6 increased the TIFF amount on the meter to ensure that
7 that program remains solvent. We have our TIFF
8 benefits for drivers for putting a wheelchair
9 accessible vehicle into service and to operating a
10 wheelchair accessible vehicle. But generally in
11 order to get to a larger percentage of the fleet
12 being wheelchair accessible, we need to address the
13 overall health of taxi industry.

14 So, to that end, the Medallion Relief Program
15 lifting almost half a billion dollars in debt off the
16 industry and the meter rate of fare increase, has
17 helped the industry get on better financial footing.
18 We're seeing more medallions come out of storage and
19 we hope as more medallions come out of storage, we'll
20 see more wheelchair accessible vehicles on the road.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In Fiscal Year '23
22 Accessible Dispatch Median wait time citywide was 13
23 minutes and 6 seconds. This time has stayed
24 relatively flat over the past years. Are there ways
25 to improve this time?

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1 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question.

2
3 We're always looking to increase the service for
4 passengers who use wheelchairs. It's [00:40:21] that
5 number I believe since we expanded the program
6 citywide. Taxis most often operate in the central
7 business district of Manhattan, so you'll see some
8 shorter wait times in the central business of
9 Manhattan compared to the outer boroughs where there
10 are fewer taxis. And where there are fewer taxis,
11 there are fewer wheelchair accessible taxis.

12 But we're always evaluating our accessible
13 dispatch program, thinking about ways to increase
14 incentives to drivers who are taking these trips.
15 Again, I mentioned the increase in the TIF amount
16 earlier that passengers pay. This should help better
17 fund the program, so we could provide more incentives
18 for drivers who are taking these trips.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And why hasn't the
20 TLC shortened and updated require response times for
21 for-hire vehicles with wheelchair accessible vehicles
22 in five years?

23 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. So,
24 we stood up a first in nation wheelchair
25 accessibility program for Uber and Lyft. We were the

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1 first jurisdiction in all of the country to require
2 they provide meaningful wheelchair accessible
3 service. I'm happy to report the program has been a
4 success. There's always room for improvement.
5 Collectively, Uber and Lyft in the FHV industry are
6 servicing about 30,000 requests for wheelchair
7 accessible vehicles per month.
8

9 Under our program, they're required to service 80
10 percent of those requests in under ten minutes and 90
11 percent in under 15 minutes, and I'm happy to report,
12 both companies are meeting those goals. 96 percent
13 of all requests for wheelchair accessible vehicles
14 are serviced in under 15 minutes and I believe it's
15 82 percent of all requests are serviced in under ten
16 minutes.

17 Part of this program that I think is very
18 beneficial is the goal of all of this obviously is to
19 provide equivalent service to ensure that our
20 citizens and our tourists who use wheelchairs are
21 able to receive equivalent service to passengers who
22 do not use wheelchairs. Part of this program
23 involved getting wait time data for non-accessible
24 trips. Something that the TLC never had before. So,
25 now we have this data set that shows how much wait

1 times are requests for non-wheelchair accessible
2 vehicles and I think the path forward is to look at
3 that data compared to the wait times for non-
4 wheelchair accessible vehicles and adjust
5 accordingly.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In fiscal year '23,
8 86.4 percent of accessible dispatched trips were
9 fulfilled as requested trips. What is usually the
10 cause for an accessible dispatched trip not being
11 fulfilled as a requested trip?

12 EDWARD WILTON: So, it's difficult to say for any
13 given request whether or not a driver accepts it and
14 then declines or simply there is not a driver in the
15 area. I'm happy to check in with our current
16 accessible dispatch provider MTM to see if they have
17 got a better understanding of the declines and the
18 reasons behind those.

19 But certainly, declining a request for an
20 accessible dispatched trip is a violation of TLC
21 rules. That is a service refusal that the TLC takes
22 very seriously, so to the extent any of the
23 nonservice trips are the result of declines in the
24 program, we can prosecute those accordingly.
25

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: All passengers are
4 required to wear a seat belt, not their own, in a
5 taxi or for-hire vehicle according to New York State
6 Law. Who - what is the protocol in terms of a driver
7 ensuring that a passenger that may be wheelchair
8 bound is properly secured?

9 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. The
10 driver is 100 percent responsible for ensuring the
11 securements in a wheelchair accessible vehicle are
12 properly used.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If a driver refuses?

14 EDWARD WILTON: That is a service refusal. If a
15 driver refuses to use a securement, I would urge
16 anybody who has experienced that to report it
17 directly to the TLC and we can take appropriate
18 action.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And how long does it
20 take from a passenger's 311 safety complaint about
21 not being secured by the driver until a hearing is
22 held? And how long does it take until the matter is
23 resolved?

24 EDWARD WILTON: Yeah, I believe we can provide
25 you numbers on consumer complaints generally. I
don't know if we have any specific in terms of

1
2 securement complaints. We don't have the numbers
3 with the securement specific complaints but -

4 RYAN WANTTAJA: We can definitely drill that
5 down.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay and then every
7 blind person has difficulty finding a for-hire
8 vehicle they have ordered. Often the driver may
9 drive off without the passenger and the passenger is
10 left stranded. What is the TLC doing to see that
11 blind passengers can find their vehicle and get in
12 safely?

13 EDWARD WILTON: Certainly, one of the benefits of
14 the emerging technology here is there are more
15 accessibility options for passengers with different
16 disabilities. Uhm, I do know that the apps also have
17 option for passengers with visual disabilities,
18 certainly happy to work with them but again, if any
19 passenger is refused on the basis of their
20 disability, that is a service refusal. We take those
21 incredibly seriously. Say a passenger who is blind
22 who is denied service based off of that disability, I
23 would urge them to report that immediately to 311 and
24 we can handle it appropriately.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm going
4 to come back to questions after Council Member
5 Farias.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so much Chair.
7 So, I really appreciated your enthusiastic response
8 to my bill folks. Uhm, I just want to clarify to.
9 This bills intention is obviously not to question the
10 TLC's authority as a regulator. As an elected member
11 of the City Council, you know it's our duty to
12 propose legislation that responds to the needs of our
13 constituency. And specifically in my district, I
14 represent many drivers who have expressed feelings of
15 pinch, by the slew of fees required by drivers to
16 operate in New York City.

17 This bill, I'm hoping, can alleviate some of that
18 burden by providing them an opportunity to earn
19 passive income and I'm certain that the agency has
20 oversight over the app-based services, as we've seen
21 and heard even just by the pilot examples that you
22 have given. And the TLC can ensure that there are
23 rules in place that are mutually beneficial to both
24 the driver and the rider. So, I just have a couple
25 questions. I understand some of the concern with the
advertising and vehicle for the outer borough

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1 drivers. I guess my question is and maybe it's silly
2 but why don't we keep advertising in the yellow and
3 green taxis if they're so burdensome for customers
4 and annoying etc., etc.?

5
6 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for that question. I'm
7 both happy and displeased to report that we have been
8 attempting to reduce advertising prevalence in the
9 back of taxis for years.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay.

11 EDWARD WILTON: Advertisements were first
12 introduced into the back of taxis during the
13 introduction of what was then called the Taxi
14 Passenger Enhancement Program or the credit card
15 readers in the back of taxis. These devices also
16 generated trip data for the TLC automatically and
17 this has required equipment in taxis. And do offset
18 the cost of the required equipment. The TLC at the
19 time, allowed for the equipment providers to show ads
20 in the back as a means of deferring the cost of the
21 required equipment for fleets and drivers alike.

22 We have enacted several pilot programs in the
23 past to pilot screenless - they're now called tech
24 systems in the back of taxis. We have rearranged our
25 rules to reduce the time in ads. Uh the time ads can

1
2 be shown on to require a default off, a default mute
3 in there but the general theme of the regulations
4 surrounding this has been to reduce the prevalence of
5 ads in taxis to the extent possible.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Do you have data on how
7 many people quick mute or turn it off? Is that an
8 ability, like do we have that ability?

9 EDWARD WILTON: It is, it might be data we can
10 acquire from the providers. It's not part of the
11 regular trip records that they give to us but I'm
12 certainly happy to reach out to the two main
13 providers, Curb and CMT, to see what data they have
14 on passengers quick and mute.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Sure and I mean, I guess
16 my general interest is like, with codification of
17 many laws, like we can do a lot of different things.
18 And so, I'm wondering from you or from you folks if
19 you can speak on why do you think we won't be able to
20 regulate this in a way that could work for for-hire
21 vehicle drivers?

22 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. I
23 think it's important to sort of parse what we would
24 be regulating. There's the physical equipment in the
25 back of the taxis. The screen itself. The

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3 dimensions, how it's secured. We certainly are able
4 to regulate around that. Regulating the conditions
5 of vehicles is one of the agencies primary
6 responsibilities. Where it gets a bit tricky is
7 regulating the content on those screens. Where the
8 TLC or city agency or part of the government and the
9 governments ability to restrict speech is generally
very limited.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Right.

11 EDWARD WILTON: We've had federal litigation
12 around this in the past. Uhm and uh I know it's a
13 different context but the MTA has also had a series
14 of litigation around their ability to regulate what
15 ads are in the subways. We're the government, you
16 can't restrict speech is I think the most basic way I
17 think I could say it right now.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: But I think in essence
19 right, like a corporation like Uber or Lyft could
20 choose what content they display or not. Like how
21 you know Elon Musk can do whatever he wants on
22 Twitter.

23 EDWARD WILTON: Certainly, yes. So, we see this
24 on the Uber and Lyft apps today. These aren't
25 screens that are affixed to the backs of taxis but if

1
2 you open up your Uber or Lyft app, you'll be shown
3 ads for a multitude of things but this is not a
4 device that's attached to the taxi. It's not
5 something that's auto playing when a passenger gets
6 in. So, it's not something the TLC certainly exerts
7 authority over.

8 Similarly for our advertising the back of taxis
9 today, CMT and Curb I understand have contracts with
10 different advertising providers to decide what gets
11 displayed in there.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Makes sense. Thank you
13 for that and I guess one of the other added benefits
14 that I've seen for this is, you know in my district
15 particularly for example, technology is very sparse
16 for constituency to get notices from the city, from
17 the Mayor, even from myself. Like, I can't walk down
18 the street where there is a link kiosk but when I do
19 hail a yellow taxi, I do get to see different notices
20 from the city, different messages from our different
21 commissioners and so, uhm, just I mean, do you think
22 it's appropriate that outer borough customers don't
23 actually have the same level of resources or
24 invitations or notices from the city as they're
25 trying to take a ride in comparison to what we have

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3 here in the central business district or the island
4 of Manhattan?

5 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. I do
6 think it's absolutely important that all residents in
7 New York City receive important updates. On the taxi
8 side, we have requirements that set aside a set
9 amount of time for PSA's provided by the agency that
10 if the device does display advertisements, they must
11 also display city provided content. Certainly any
12 advertising at the back of FHV's would like to see
13 that city provided content as well but I believe
14 there's other mechanisms we can get our messages out
15 other than bombarding passengers with ads.

16 We have a very active set of social media
17 accounts that are constantly pushing out our
18 messages. We have our Van Hailen. We've got a
19 wonderful mobile outreach team that is outside right
20 now passing out every piece of literature you can
21 imagine to any driver who is interested. So, we're
22 always interested in ways that we can better
23 communicate with our licenses, with our passengers.
24 We're just not sure that the introduction of adds is
25 going to be the best place to put those
26 notifications. Often time, you know they're drowned

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3 out by the adds themselves. Passengers will see the
4 add and click the off button anyway, so it's not the
5 most effective means for getting TLC information out
6 to our passengers.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay thank you and just
8 please keep me posted on if we can figure out if we
9 have that data and I will say, as someone who had the
10 first Bronx Van Hailen event in my district office a
11 couple months ago, has served over 200 and something,
12 250 drivers. It was wildly accessible and people
13 really had a great time and enjoyed it very much.
14 So, thank you for partnering with me on that.

15 I will ask a couple more questions on for-hire
16 vehicle electric licenses, electric vehicle licenses.
17 So, in 2022, the TLC announced that it would issue
18 1,000 new FHV vehicle licenses restricted to electric
19 vehicles. Have all 1,000 licenses been issued? And
20 what is the new issuance and if they have been – has
21 that been deemed successful?

22 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you Council Member. All
23 1,000 licenses have been applied for is what I can
24 say but we don't have the 1,000 vehicles on the road
25 yet. When we were establishing our licensed issuance
because we had a finite amount of licenses, what we

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1
2 didn't want was for drivers to go out and purchase a
3 vehicle only to not be able to obtain one of the
4 limited number of licenses we had. So, the way we
5 did this was we had drivers sign a statement of
6 intent, which was basically a ticket to get a license
7 once you got your vehicle. So, after you received
8 your ticket, you had 90 days to acquire a vehicle but
9 we have been somewhat generous in allowing drivers
10 extra time because we understand the constraints on
11 finding vehicles at the moment.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Sure and I mean I guess,
13 the intent - what's the intention behind giving them
14 out? I know we have hopefully more than 1,000
15 applicants but at least 1,000. Do we know if the
16 priority is to give to individuals or to give to
17 companies with EV fleets. I know we're seeing a
18 variety of options right now for drivers, some that
19 can't necessarily afford to buy it are leasing it
20 from companies or setting up different systems for
21 themselves?

22 EDWARD WILTON: Certainly, thank you for the
23 question. For the 1,000 licenses we issued, 600 were
24 dedicated to driver's because it was very important
25 to us, the drivers that maybe stuck in leases today

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1 have access to their own licenses, their own small
2 business but also recognizing the point that we need
3 these companies to build charging infrastructure and
4 many of them need their own licenses to do so. We
5 wanted to make sure that 400 were available to
6 anybody. But all 400 of those did not go
7 specifically to corporations, drivers were able to
8 access those as well. I think one of the lessons we
9 learned on our first round of EV license issuance is
10 one there is incredible demand for drivers out there
11 for these things. We had a waitlist in the thousands
12 for them, all 1,000 were snapped up within minutes of
13 opening this, so we know there's the demand out there
14 and we also know that uh trying to sort of apportion
15 the licenses between the different sectors, between
16 drivers, between companies, that also creates a lot
17 of unnecessary confusion. Both drivers and companies
18 need these licenses to get out of leases, to build
19 out the charging infrastructure. So, any additional
20 I think license issuance we may do in the future,
21 we'll take the lessons that we learned from our first
22 round into consideration.
23

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay thank you. I know
25 there's a - this industry itself or the sector itself

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3 has a lot of different places that we have to hone in
4 on a focus with leasing with our local drivers and
5 that were maybe part of bases, that our bases are
6 losing folks every single week. I appreciate that
7 answer. So, in FY23, there were over 78,000 TLC
8 driver licenses issued, a dramatic increase from the
9 47,000 plus in FY22 and 55,000 plus in FY21.

10 In addition, 20,548 of those licenses were new
11 licenses issued, which is also about 5,000 more in
12 FY22 and about 16,000 more in FY21. What was the
13 cause of increase in driver licenses issued?

14 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. As I
15 mentioned previously, we're seeing increased activity
16 across all sectors of the for-hire industry taxis,
17 FHV's and the licenses that we issue for drivers are
18 universal driver licenses. They allow you to drive
19 for taxis, for uber, for your local livery base and
20 jump between those as you please. So, as passengers
21 are coming back, as trips are increasing, as the per
22 trip revenue, the drivers are making increases. I
23 think we're seeing more driver's see this as a good
24 economic opportunity with their license.

25 On top of that, the total license issued I
believe includes our renewals. Our driver licenses

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3 are on three-year renewal cycles, so some years will
4 naturally have more license renewals than others.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: And was there any concern
6 around saturation of the market?

7 EDWARD WILTON: We have not seen any saturation
8 of the market. We have been monitoring driver pay.
9 We've been monitoring trip volumes, importantly on
10 the Uber and Lyft side of this, we're also monitoring
11 what we call utilization rates, so these are the
12 times drivers spend with passengers, which is a good
13 indication about where supply and demand are at any
14 given moment.

15 We want high utilization rates. This means we've
16 got passengers in the backs of our vehicles. That
17 drivers are making more money because they're doing
18 more trips and we've seen the utilization rate for
19 the industry hovered about 58 percent, which is where
20 it was prior to the pandemic. What we believe is you
21 know has resulted in I think short response time for
22 passengers but without a flood of drivers and
23 vehicles on the road.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, I'm done since I
25 went very over my time. Thank you so much for
answering my questions. Thank you Chair.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I am going to ask a
4 few questions on behalf of Council Member Shekar
5 Krishnan. So, the TLC metered rate increase in
6 December 2022 and data set used for the final goes
7 into 2023, as to the increase into effect. However,
8 the report doesn't acknowledge how that change could
9 have impacted pay for both flex payer trips and
10 traditional street hail trips. Why not? And why
11 were there inconsistencies in the TLC data in the
12 first report to the final report.

13 For instance the initial report contains a
14 comparison of average driver pay based on Flex Fare
15 verses the meter fare from a few actual trips. This
16 comparison was really helpful to give examples of
17 what drivers could actually see and pay. They would
18 then know that for a trip to Jamaica – from Jamaica
19 to Jackson Heights, a Flex Fare driver could expect
20 to make about \$6.00 less on average.

21 However, because that information was not
22 included in the final report, we could not see
23 whether there were any changes over the duration of
24 the pilot program.

25 EDWARD WILTON: I thank the Council Member for
his questions. I'm not aware of any inconsistencies

1 across reports. I do know that our first report was
2 issued in the Flex Fare programs infancy when it was
3 primarily being used to provide accessible dispatch
4 trips - sorry, Access-A-Ride trips through the
5 Access-A-Rides on demand pilot.
6

7 So, these are trips provided by the MTA to our
8 taxis for Access-A-Ride. Customers neither app had
9 opened up really a public facing version of the Flex
10 Fare program. So, what you were seeing were fares
11 that taxi drivers were paid principally on Access-A-
12 Ride trips. That was I think well over 99 percent of
13 the trips that were conducted at the time of the
14 first pilot. So, these weren't reflective of real
15 consumer transactions. So, the updated report that
16 we recently issued, happened after we insisted that
17 the apps offer this to passengers. This is also
18 after Uber incorporated the e-hail options into their
19 app. So, that's why I think the driver pay data on
20 our second report is a bit more robust and I think a
21 bit more indicative of what the Flex Fare program
22 actually would produce.

23 And as we've seen there in the over 6 million
24 Flex Fare trips we've seen, the average metered trip
25 per mile produces about \$4.28 for a driver. Where

1 the Flex Fare payment has given drivers about \$4.44
2 per mile. So, a per mile basis, the Flex Fare pays a
3 little bit more and I think that makes sense because
4 e-hail drivers always have the option to decline an
5 e-hail. So, if there's a street hail in front of
6 them that they believe is going to pay more, they are
7 going to click decline on the e-hail.
8

9 So, we've seen the companies pay drivers more on
10 these trips in order to entice them to take them.
11 And again, as I mentioned earlier in my testimony,
12 the e-hail trips tend to be longer than street hail
13 trips. The drivers are making a little bit more on a
14 per mile basis but are certainly making more on a per
15 trip basis because the trips tend to be longer. But
16 if the Council Member has any questions about the
17 data, I'm happy to reach out to his office and we can
18 have those discussions.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: He has a few more.
20 Uhm, the initial report of the Flex Fare Pilot
21 program includes the average time of trips by drivers
22 but the final report released last month doesn't go
23 into the time aspect. Why didn't the TLC want to
24 discuss the average time on a trip in the final
25

1
2 report given that is how we conceptualize pay for
3 most workers?

4 On the debt issue and medallion crisis, we
5 understand 2,200 loans have been restructured under
6 the Medallion Relief Program. But NYTWA estimates
7 that 800 remain. What is the TLC doing to bring
8 those lenders to the table while NYTWA is working on
9 a solution for the remaining 800 loans? What is the
10 status of the funds of the \$30,000 grants that will
11 be doled out to drivers?

12 EDWARD WILTON: I thank the Council Member for
13 their questions. To address the MRP portion of this
14 first, we are constantly discussing with lenders ways
15 to get them into either of our MRP programs. Some
16 lenders portfolios make more sense for them to
17 convert on the original MRP program. Some lenders,
18 most lenders have availed themselves through the MRP+
19 program. But we're in constant conversations with
20 lenders to get as many medallions into this program
21 as possible.

22 We set up this program to help all of our
23 individual medallion owners who need that help. So,
24 today here, I would advocate for any lender who is
25 not currently participating to think of the health

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3 and welfare of your portfolio and the members, the
4 drivers that were in your portfolio. This is a great
5 deal for drivers. This is a great deal for lenders,
6 so any lender who is not currently participating, I
7 would just urge to come to the table.

8 On the per mile versus time metric, I'm happy to
9 provide the Council Member updated per minute
10 numbers. The Taxi meter notoriously does not
11 calculate mileage and minutes at the same time. We
12 thought per mile was the best way to present the
13 driver payment data but we're happy to work with the
14 Council Members office to get him whatever additional
15 data he might need.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. In terms
17 of driver complaints, for fiscal year '23, there were
18 24,131 driver complaints, an increase compared to
19 fiscal year '22s 16,629 and fiscal year '21s 9,250.
20 What is the cause of this increase? How does TLC
21 work with drivers to ensure that they are providing
22 good customer service? And are there classes
23 provided to drivers to improve the customer
24 experience?

25 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. The
increase in consumer complaints can be attributed

1 almost entirely to complaints about our licensed
2 vehicles parking in bike lanes. It's my
3 understanding that there are now apps out there that
4 allow you to take a picture of a license plate of a
5 driver parked in a bike lane and send it straight to
6 311, that sends it to us. So as the ease of making
7 complaints has increased, so has the number of
8 complaints. So, we are seeing bicyclists take
9 pictures of our cars and send those in. It's easier
10 now, so they're doing it more. That's the main
11 reason for the increase in consumer complaints.
12

13 The other cause of the increase is just more
14 activity in the industry. We've seen trip volumes go
15 up as trips increase, unfortunately so do our
16 complaints. It means that we've got more passengers
17 in the back of vehicles. I mean obviously our goal
18 is to have zero consumer complaints for all of our
19 licenses to providing perfect service and we're
20 always working towards that end. In terms of
21 classes, drivers are required to take about providing
22 good customer service. All of our drivers are
23 required to complete a 24-hour driver training course
24 prior to their licensure. This includes customer
25 service provisions as well.

1
2 Importantly, this also includes customer service
3 provisions surrounding providing wheelchair
4 accessible service. So this is not only just how use
5 the securements but also how to interact with
6 passengers using a wheelchair. Upon license renewal,
7 all drivers are required to demonstrate that they can
8 properly use the securements in a wheelchair
9 accessible vehicle, prior to having their license
10 renewed. So, there is no driver today can get their
11 license renewed without demonstrating in a hands-on
12 demonstration that they know how to use the
13 securements.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Service
15 refusals summons. TLC issued 521 summonses for
16 service refusal in Fiscal 2023, an increase of 2,784
17 when compared to Fiscal 2022. Why have service
18 refusal summonses increase so dramatically over the
19 last year? And how does the TLC enforce service
20 refusals?

21 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. I
22 think the short answer is that along the pandemic, we
23 have our enforcement officers out there doing more
24 operations today. Uhm, a lot of these services
25 refusals are in field service refusals that our

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1 inspectors are getting on the spot. During the
2 COVID-19 pandemic, our inspectors were redeployed to
3 help other agencies assist with enforcing masking
4 requirements, helping out our food delivery program
5 but since those programs have wound down, our
6 inspectors are back out in the field and they are
7 issuing more summonses.
8

9 So, now we have our enforcement back to doing TLC
10 enforcement, we're going to see an increase in
11 summonses across all categories including service
12 refusals.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Moving to
14 Vision Zero summonses, TLC issued 17,515 Vision Zero
15 summonses in Fiscal 2023, a 21 percent decline when
16 compared to Fiscal 2022. Who is issuing these
17 summonses? Is it NYPD or is it TLC? And what caused
18 this increase in summonses? Is the decline due to
19 positive driving habits or decline in enforcement?
20 And is this decline related to TLC staffing
21 difficulties?

22 RYAN WANTTAJA: I'll hand it over to Deputy
23 Commissioner Wilton. So, we're you know across the
24 agency, we're seeing some uhm hire than typical
25 vacancy rates and our enforcement section is feeling

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1
2 the brunt of that so, and a reduced number of
3 enforcement, uh summonses being issued is tied to
4 just a reduced headcount. We're actively -

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Reduced TLC
6 headcount?

7 RYAN WANTTAJA: Yeah, through attrition. We
8 don't have enough - we need to get some more
9 enforcement officers out there to help issue
10 summonses. And we are, we are working with OMB and
11 DECAS on trying to get another class of enforcement
12 agents out there.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Are you concerned
14 about filling those vacancies considering that they
15 are cuts that are being made right now in the
16 agencies?

17 RYAN WANTTAJA: Not for enforcement agents no.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay, enforcement
19 agencies are not being cut?

20 RYAN WANTTAJA: Well, this would be - this would
21 be a new class. So, this would be an infusion of new
22 heads to our headcount portfolio to accommodate the
23 number of people who participate in the class.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Going on
25 medallion values as of May 2022, TLC reported that

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3 the value of medallions on the secondary market were
4 around \$137,000. What is the current value of the
5 medallion?

6 EDWARD WILTON: Thank you for the question. I
7 can't talk about the medallion value, only what
8 they've been transacting for. We've seen medallions
9 rate for up to \$200,000. We recently had a few
10 auctions of medallions that were in default in the
11 Medallion Relief program and those sold for \$175,000
12 and \$176,000.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How many medallions
14 have been exchanged in Fiscal 2023 and so far in
15 Fiscal 2024?

16 EDWARD WILTON: I don't believe we got the
17 medallion transaction numbers in front of us. I'm
18 happy to provide those. They're on our website. I
19 can get those to you immediately after this hearing.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If someone can get
21 them over here.

22 EDWARD WILTON: Yeah, we can certainly ask, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Is the increase in
24 medallion prices seen in the last year or so an
25 indication that they will increase during the next
couple of years? Is this forecasted by the TLC?

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3 EDWARD WILTON: We tend to not forecast medallion
4 values. The medallion is simply what somebody will
5 buy it for at a given time. What we've seen though
6 is encouraging. Simply to increase the meter rate of
7 fare. There's more earning potential on medallions,
8 which I think translates to increased value on those.
9 Certainly, the \$170,000 evaluation of the Medallion
10 Relief program. What we guarantee the medallion up
11 to I think sets the baseline for this. So, we do
12 expect to see medallion prices increase
13 proportionately with the increase in fare, increase
14 in trips as it becomes more of a good economic
15 opportunity for you know our drivers out there.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We've been joined by
17 Council Member Shekar Krishnan. Next, I want to
18 pivot to the commuter van industry. You mentioned
19 that you've seen an expansion of licensed commuter
20 van industry for the first time since the pandemic,
21 which I'm really excited to hear. How many commuter
22 vans are currently on the road?

23 EDWARD WILTON: I believe we have 38 currently on
24 the road. We were at 33 for awhile and we added five
25 in the past year but -

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And what is the TLC
4 doing to support the commuter van industry?

5 EDWARD WILTON: Certainly. We are in active
6 conver- what we understand to be a major issue in the
7 commuter van industry is the availability of
8 insurance. We understand that there just are not
9 insurers that are willing to insure these vehicles
10 for their high passenger account, the sort of, the
11 history of bad actors there. So, what we're doing is
12 we're having active conversations with insurers to
13 see if there's products they can offer this industry.
14 We are working with the industry itself and their
15 advocacy in Albany to expand insurance options for
16 the industry.

17 So, what we're trying to do is address one of the
18 root causes of a decline in license commuter van
19 activity and if we can solve the insurance issue.
20 We're hopeful that the number of license commuter
21 vans will increase.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And are there any
23 steps TLC believes the Council could take to improve
24 the state of the commuter van industry?

25 EDWARD WILTON: I don't have any recommendations
right now but I certainly would love to work with

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3 Council on finding creative paths forward to help out
4 the commuter van industry.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Do you have
6 any answers for the ones that we were waiting on
7 responses?

8 RYAN WANTTAJA: Sure, at the beginning of FY23,
9 we had the Medallion Relief Program I believe \$54
10 million of debt. Over the course of FY23, we
11 relieved another \$385 million of debt for a total of
12 \$433 million and then so far in FY24, we've had
13 another \$12 million of debt relief for the total of
14 \$445.

15 Additionally, in regards to the ODRC numbers,
16 since inception, there's been 3,800 ODRC drivers
17 serviced by ODRC and then a different way to look at
18 it is we've had 2,900 medallion service. The drivers
19 or the medallions but that's since the inception of
20 ODRC. We still have a few more numbers coming in.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, as we go into the
22 public testimony, if you could have someone stay
23 behind to be able to share the data with me that
24 we're waiting on?

25 EDWARD WILTON: Absolutely.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Now,
4 we'll move to our public testimony. I will say, we
5 have a lot of individuals signed up to testify, so we
6 are going to ask that folks hold true to the two-
7 minute limit in respect for one another to allow
8 people the opportunity to speak.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now turn
10 to public testimony. Each panelist will be given two
11 minutes to speak. For panelists testifying in
12 person, please come to the dais as your name is
13 called and wait for your turn to speak and for
14 panelists who are testifying remotely, once your name
15 is called, a member of our staff will unmute you and
16 the Sergeant at Arms will give you the go ahead to
17 begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that
18 you may begin before delivering your testimony.

19 I would like to now welcome Jean Ryan, Bhairavi
20 Desai, Pat Gatling, Maureen Regan, Chayanga Sherpa,
21 and Bunmi Olowoyeye to the dais.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Jean, you can start
23 whenever you're ready.

24 JEAN RYAN: Hi, excuse me. I am Jean Ryan, I'm
25 the representative for Taxis for All Campaign today
and I'm President of DIA. Taxis for All Campaign is

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1
2 a coalition of disability rights groups working to
3 get successful cabs and for-hire vehicles in New York
4 City.

5 We have been doing this since 1996. While things
6 have gotten better, they need to get way better.

7 Before we had none. Now, we have some but we can't
8 get rides. We're very concerned about the lack of
9 attention and results from the TLC with regards to
10 people with disabilities, especially wheelchair users
11 and people who are blind actually being able to hail
12 a cab and safely ride in it. And also, to get an app
13 based for-hire vehicle and safely ride in it.

14 We keep complaining about systemic problems to no
15 avail. We are tired of being ignored, talked down to
16 and of the TLC not effectively addressing our
17 systemic issues. They try to put the responsibility
18 on us and it's not up to us to change. We're pushing
19 for change but if we can't change how taxi drivers
20 don't secure us or don't pick up blind people. It's
21 not up to us to try to do something different and we
22 wouldn't even know what we'd have to do. Some of the
23 worst problems you know, after all these years, are
24 less than 50 percent of the yellow taxi fleet is
25 successful. They drive off without us. They tell us

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2 to call and when we try to hail, they say no. When
3 they're not picking us up, they want us to call
4 Accessible Dispatch. They uhm, at the airport, it
5 takes about three cabs of tries for us to actually
6 get in one and I'm talking about weighed vehicles,
7 not regular ones because they say, "oh my ramp is
8 broken or I don't know how to use the ramp." Things
9 like that.

10 So, you know we're disgusted and we want drivers
11 to pick us up so they'll have the business and we'll
12 get a ride. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks, we'll now hear from
15 Bhairavi Desai.

16 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Good morning Madam Chair and
17 members of the Council. My name Bhairavi Desai. I'm
18 the Executive Director of the New York Taxi Workers
19 Alliance.

20 There is so much to cover in this large industry.
21 I'm going to begin with talking about Intro. 1079,
22 which is on the agenda for today. We wholly support
23 the passage of this bill. In this industry, e-hail
24 trips are the only ones that remain nonregulated,
25 which means that right now, it's a bidding war when

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2 yellow cab drivers and green cab drivers are
3 dispatched by these e-hail companies. While there's
4 no regulation on what they charge the passenger,
5 there's also no regulation on what they pay to the
6 driver. And you know, yellow cab drivers depend on
7 the metered rate in order to cover all of their
8 expenses.

9 The TLC's initial report found that on e-hail
10 trips, drivers were being paid 20 percent below the
11 metered rate. This is not acceptable. Their
12 expenses are not cut by 20 percent. Why is there pay
13 being cut by 20 percent? And their latest report
14 showed that the majority of these trips are now in
15 Manhattan, not in the outer boroughs and so, it's
16 passengers that would normally street hail are now e-
17 hailing. The only change that's happening is the cut
18 to the driver income and that's not acceptable. We
19 ask you to pass 1079.

20 Also, we ask you to put on the table Intro. 1078.
21 Deactivations, unfair firings, the fancy word for
22 Wall Street to fire a working person overnight to
23 take away their livelihood. It has an unbelievable
24 impact particularly on Uber and Lyft drivers who pay
25 for expenses for the vehicle sometimes as much as

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3 \$80,000 in order to go to work. Imagine being left
4 without a job overnight with no notice, no fair
5 reason and no right to an independent appeal, an
6 appeal independent of the companies. We ask this
7 Council to have a hearing on 1079 and on 1078 and
8 pass the bill this year immediately. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Please no
10 clapping. Please no clapping or you'll be asked to
11 be removed from the Chamber.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear
13 from Pat Gatling.

14 PAT GATLING: Good morning Madam Chair and the
15 members of the Committee on Transportation and
16 Infrastructure. My name is Patricia Gatling and I'm
17 appearing here today on behalf of the International
18 Association of Transportation Regulators, IATR to
19 provide information relevant to Intro. Number 1139,
20 which would allow for-hire vehicles to display
21 advertising on an electronic tablet inside their
22 vehicle.

23 I'm the former New York City Human Rights
24 Commissioner and I've been an IATR member for many
25 years having served as a speaker and a peer reviewer
with an expertise in transportation equity, civil

1
2 rights and labor related issues. Our IAT Chair
3 Carlton Thomas and our President Matt Dous were
4 unable to be here today and they've asked me to
5 testify as I was involved with the subject matter.
6 The IATR, for your information, is a 36-year-old non-
7 profit educational association comprised mostly of
8 global transportation leaders, not only in ground
9 transportation but in air ports and micro mobilities
10 and sort of the whole, the vast industry. And one of
11 the activities that we conduct of course is research
12 and recording on that research.

13 Recently in 2021, our most recent report on Model
14 Regulations for Interior and Exterior Digital
15 Advertising for Taxicabs and Transportation Network
16 Company Vehicles, we addressed this very issue. And
17 we've attached that report to our testimony for your
18 review and at any time I'm available to speak with
19 you all individually about the report and its
20 findings.

21 Now we're not here to support or not support the
22 bill but we are here to tell you that the bill is
23 consistent with our research and our findings and the
24 global best practices and standards for the industry.
25 We'd also note the concerns of the Council being the

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3 safety of the devices in the vehicles can easily be
4 addressed and have been addressed in the past and
5 we'd also talk about the - just one issue, the source
6 of revenue. We believe that it would be a generous
7 source of revenue for industry drivers and it's done
8 globally. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now hear
10 from Maureen Regan.

11 MAUREEN REGAN: Thank you. Thank you Madam Chair
12 and thank you for your sponsorship of this bill. I
13 would also like to thank Kevin Kotowski for his
14 support in moving this through the process. I am a
15 license PA in the State of New York. I am a past
16 President of the New York City Society PA's as well
17 as a delegate to the AAPA. There is a bill before
18 you that would allow PA's to sign off on TLC driver
19 physical exams. This is actually something that's
20 been going on for years. There is a law in the State
21 of New York that says wherever it says physician, it
22 is within the education scope and ability of a PA to
23 do so. And that's why this bill for clarification is
24 before this Committee.

25 There are over 20,000 licensed PA's in the State
of New York and 33 PA programs, so certainly a

1
2 solution to the current healthcare workforce shortage
3 and clarifying this would certainly make it easier
4 for the drivers to meet those requirements. Thank
5 you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so much. We
7 will now call on the next round of panelists. Oh,
8 you can go.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we'll now here from
10 Chayanga Sherpa.

11 CHAYANGA SHERPA: Thank you. Thank you all.
12 Good morning everybody. Thank you Council Member.
13 My name is Chayanga Sherpa. I am a Lyft Driver and a
14 part-time student and today I am here to support the
15 Intro. 1139 by Council Member Farias and request the
16 City Council to pass this bill.

17 I'm also here to testify in front of you all that
18 Play Octopus, the company that does this tablet
19 advertising has been nothing but one of the best
20 entertainment tools in my car as a rideshare driver.
21 It is very engaging and often times initiates a fun
22 conversation between me and my passenger. It has
23 very useful information such as driver profile, live
24 navigations, weather, trivia etc..

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3 I've been with Play Octopus since 2019 and it has
4 boosted my earnings through tips and from the Play
5 Octopus rewards itself. I'd be totally against the
6 Play Octopus if it was spreading particle propaganda,
7 hatred, racism or discrimination etc. But because
8 Play Octopus is all about entertainment and
9 information sharing, I urge you all respective
10 individuals to let us to continue to use the platform
11 as it helps already struggling drivers with the
12 current inflation hike. Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so much for
14 each of your testimonies. I would now like to see if
15 there's any questions from colleagues. I know
16 Council Member Shekar Krishnan has some.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thanks so much Chair
18 Farias and thank you to our usual Chair Majority Whip
19 Brooks-Powers but thank you all for your testimony
20 today and good morning everyone. Sorry I couldn't
21 hear all of it because of another hearing next door
22 but I did want to ask a couple questions of Bhairavi,
23 it's very nice to see you from your Taxi Workers
24 Alliance. Thank you for your work. Thank you for
25 the drivers who are here today too for your great
work and I'm proudly in solidarity with you all in

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1 every struggle that we face to make sure that you
2 all, your voices are heard and your rights are
3 protected as drivers. So, thank you all so much.

4 I just wanted to ask you and I may have missed
5 some of this in your testimony to but just with
6 Intro. 1079 that we're considering today, you know
7 this disparity and we heard some testimony from TLC
8 before too but didn't quite get the clear answers
9 that we wanted to on why this disparity between the
10 e-hail rates and the regular street hail rates, why
11 it exists but I was hoping you could speak in a bit
12 more personal terms about for drivers, what does that
13 disparity mean? When they're getting paid less on e-
14 hails than they are on street hails. What is the
15 personal, the human impact on drivers, on their
16 livelihood, on their families?

17 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Thank you Councilman. Basically
18 what it means is, instead of the trip paying you,
19 you're paying for the trip as the driver because you
20 know trips for drivers are not just about revenue,
21 they also represent expenses. Because when you're
22 engaged in a trip, there's a cost to of course
23 gasoline. It's also wear and tear of the vehicle.
24 It also adds to your insurance rates depending on the
25

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2 mileage, right that you're putting and you're at
3 risk. And so, when on these e-hail trips, the driver
4 is being paid below the metered rate. It means that
5 the cost of that trip is now being covered by the
6 driver. The trip has now become a liability, rather
7 than a source of revenue. I think it's really
8 important to note here that I mean for yellow cab
9 drivers, you know you've got the highest level of
10 expenses across the industry, both because of the
11 medallion but also because of the vehicle
12 requirements.

13 You know, there's a vehicle retirement
14 requirement on yellow cabs. It does not exist for
15 FHV's for example. The insurance rates can also be
16 higher and for drivers, for yellow cab drivers, the
17 fare that they earn, that gross fare, a large
18 percentage of that goes to our taxes. You know, for
19 example, you know if there's \$2.50 plus another
20 \$0.50, \$3.00 that goes to the MTA, there's \$1.00 that
21 goes to a TLC improvement fund that's supposed to
22 subsidize the transition to accessible vehicles. But
23 that's money that's not going to the driver. If it's
24 a JFK trip, there's also a fee that goes to Port
25 Authority.

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2 So, on these e-hail trips, if you're getting,
3 we're seeing examples and some of our members are
4 going to testify. We're seeing examples where on
5 some trips, you're earning like \$17.00 less than what
6 it would be on the meter. And that includes still
7 having to pay like \$3.00, \$4.00 out of that money
8 just to go toward these taxis. So, this is a
9 significant pay cut.

10 And lastly, I just want to say, it's the driver
11 that enduring the cut. We believe that the passenger
12 is still paying the metered rate, it's just that the
13 money is not trickling down to the drivers
14 themselves.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: That's an enormous
16 disparity and thank you for also, I'm also quite
17 shocked to hear to that the passenger may be paying
18 the same metered rate but the proper income is not
19 going to the driver. How many trips would you say,
20 especially more and more with the advent of more ride
21 hail apps too. How many trips on average roughly are
22 drivers getting off of the e-hails? Because my sense
23 is \$17.00 difference for example with all the other
24 expenses, that adds up really quick over time. When
25 you have drivers who are trying to pay their rent or

1
2 their mortgage, they may have debt or otherwise that
3 they didn't incur with their medallion or otherwise
4 to, how many trips would you say on average are they
5 taking with e-hails and is that number increasing?

6 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Well, you know one of the false
7 of the TLCs report is it does not include Uber trips
8 for example. And you know of course, Uber dominates
9 in the entire industry and so, we're not seeing those
10 numbers just yet but you know, many drivers end up
11 rejecting the trips right now because they're so low
12 paying. But even if it's for example, you know one
13 trip a shift and most drivers typically work six
14 shifts within a week right? In the course of a year,
15 that could be like 300 trips and I mean, I'm
16 extremely low balling it.

17 So, uhm but one thing in the TLCs report that's
18 very important to note is they said in their final
19 report that while they expected e-hail trips to be
20 primarily in the outer boroughs, what they found is
21 that in fact that the majority in Manhattan in the
22 central business district itself. So, trips that
23 drivers would normally do as a street hail and earn
24 off the meter are now you know switching over to the
25 e-hail market where drivers are being paid less

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1 money. So, it's another reason why this bill has
2 such urgency.
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so much.
5 Thank you to the drivers and the Taxi Workers
6 Alliance.

7 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all. We'll move on
11 to our next panel now.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'd like to also
13 acknowledge that we've been joined by Brooklyn's own
14 Council Member Mercedes Narcisse.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. The next panel
16 will be Tidiane Dialio, Suves Bairagi, Bamba Diakite,
17 MD Khayrul Islam, Joseph Dim, and Tamer Rashdan.
18 We'll start actually, we'll go down this way if that
19 works. You may begin when ready.

20 JOSEPH DIM: Good morning. My name is Joseph
21 Dim. I'm an Uber Diamond Driver. I have given up to
22 15,000 trips and for two years and I'm happy to give
23 my testimony today. I'm here to support the bill
24 1139 in support of advertisement tablet in our
25 vehicles.

1
2 It helps us a lot because the passengers,
3 sometimes they are strangers. The drivers do not
4 know the passengers. The passengers do not know the
5 drivers but with the tablet, the passengers sit in
6 back of their car [INAUDIBLE 01:36:19]. The driver
7 will keep on driving. Then also it make us to get
8 some, a little money from it which is also nice. And
9 also we have some families who when they're coming to
10 the vehicle and there's no tablet in it, they feel
11 somehow, they feel unwelcomed. But when they have
12 the tablet, they feel welcomed. They play while
13 they're playing the tablet. They're asking
14 questions. That's where the communication begins.
15 And also you see some of drivers cannot speak English
16 or some cannot speak Spanish. So, with the tablet,
17 the passenger will feel comfortable and then be happy
18 while you are driving.

19 Think about it, when you don't have a tablet in
20 the vehicle, a passenger sitting behind you, just
21 watching your head, you driving, every steps you
22 make, you'll be observing - an observer. But when
23 you have such entertainment in the back of your seat,
24 the passenger will feel at home while you are busy
25 driving. There wouldn't be much of interaction

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3 because you busy focusing on your driving skill while
4 the passenger is sitting behind enjoying him or
5 herself.

6 So, I can say it clearly, with the tablet, it led
7 us to at least achieve some kind of extra income and
8 again, be happy while you are doing your job.

9 Because after the rides when you end the trips, your
10 rider will be so happy to say, I'm happy, it was a
11 very good street. And you'll feel so happy to work
12 at this.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

14 JOSEPH DIM: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

16 JOSEPH DIM: Yes.

17 MD KHAYRUL ISLAM: Thank you Honorable Council
18 Member for giving me an opportunity to provide my
19 testimony. My name is MD Khayrul Islam. I came here
20 to talk about the deactivation which one is not a
21 lender but I want to provide my testimony how the
22 difficulties I face.

23 I have been at Uber since 2019. Then after 2022,
24 they deactivated my account unauthorized. I borrowed
25 a \$75,000 car. Now I am facing the hardship because
I came from work and when I work up, I can see I am

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2 unable to go to work. Is the current situation, is I
3 can't provide my loan expense, my rent expense and
4 other expenses is a fully give the hardship in my
5 family and I am going to be mentally depressed and my
6 family also, because I can't afford their expenses.
7 So, I hope honorable Council Member is going to pass
8 as soon as possible this bill to unfair deactivation.
9 I went to the IDG office and also several places also
10 the Uber office, they don't provide me what is my
11 fault. They don't throw at me any information or
12 anything. So, this is unfair. I can't - only if
13 they feel they're going to give the decision. They
14 don't provide any proof of regarding my side. I
15 can't provide any document or anything. I am not
16 guilty. They did the decision and they deactivate
17 not only me, my community, a lot of people, they
18 spend a lot of money you know \$100,000, \$120,000 buy
19 a car and they are deactivated similarly.

20 So, it also effects our communities and also
21 livelihood. So, I hope Honorable Council Member are
22 going to pass the bill as soon as possible.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Last
24 warning if you clap you have to be remove from the
25 Chamber.

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1 BAMBIA DIAKITE: Good morning everybody. Good
2 morning. My name is Bamba Diakite. I do taxi
3 business a long time. I started in 1999. I work in
4 the street, pickup in the street. DOC say you can't
5 pick up in the street. I say okay, I'm going to try
6 yellow cab. I go in the class, spend the money
7 there, in class. I pass the yellow cab. I started
8 yellow cab. I drive yellow cab and after that yellow
9 cab, uber came in, Lyft came in. Lyft, I do all the
10 companies. After yellow cab, I go over Lyft, I drop
11 all the company.
12

13 Okay, my point, the driver hope to see, pass the
14 bill, support the driver. TLC, Uber driver is
15 [INAUDIBLE 01:41:42], okay. The family, the driver
16 have family. The driver work and support family.
17 Everybody have family. Okay, you have family. You
18 work if Uber close you up, Lyft close, you wake up in
19 the morning problem.

20 If some driver now, driver sick now in the
21 hospital and home. He call me. We talk together.
22 We work together but my family are sick. I can't
23 support. Okay, you buy food with the driver at the
24 café, the homeless people come in. Somebody dress
25 nice, they come to driver, can you help me? Or

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2 sometimes they come to driver, I lost my ride, I
3 can't take my kids to their school. You take free.
4 I lost my wallet and don't have money. The driver
5 take different fee. You don't support the driver.
6 My point is the driver. I did it before, I did it
7 across my - I go take a class in the IDG. It say,
8 you're not open to me. It don't open to me. You
9 see. Attention to IDG to taxi medallions. I see
10 different, support the driver because everybody work
11 to support your family. Family is very important.
12 Please see this bill. Congressman pass this bill.
13 It's going to be good for the driver.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

15 BAMBA DIAKITE: Your welcome.

16 TIDIANE DIALIO: Thank you member of this
17 Council. My name is Tidiane Dialio and I'm Uber and
18 Lyft driver. I'm here to talk about my experience
19 about inside deactivation. Since three years now,
20 I'm driving Uber and Lyft and in my little experience
21 the thing that I understand is we are the worker who
22 doesn't have protection. We need this bill. Why?
23 Because we're working with companies who use us like
24 just an object. They can use us as long as they
25 want, then throw you out without saying nothing.

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3 My experience I'm going to give you. One day I
4 was driving, I drove all day. In the night, I went
5 home. The day after I wake up, I was already
6 deactivated. Why? I don't know. They never tell me
7 why they deactivated me. That was Uber.

8 After I tried to contact them a long time, three
9 days, five days, I keep harassing them by texting,
10 texting. Finally, I call someone and he accepted to
11 talk to me. He said that one customer complained
12 about that I, excuse me because I use this word, let
13 I left from the seat where I was driving and I came
14 back to the back seat and I tried to have him
15 sexually without his or her consent, because I don't
16 know who did it. And when they said that, I say, can
17 you hear this kind of situation? Can you understand
18 that? This is why we receive this and complaint from
19 customer, that's why we deactivate you.

20 I say, okay, I have a camera in my car. Like
21 every driver, we have camera. Why have this camera?
22 That will let you I'd never do something like this.
23 I have family. I have children. I cannot allow
24 myself to do anything that I know could lead my job
25 to be deactivated. Unfortunately, they did not
listen to me. They did not accept. They don't even

1
2 give me chance to make up here. I tried to do
3 everything, unfortunately never until today, I'm
4 still living with that situation. So, please think
5 about us, about this bill and help us to have at
6 least a possibility to make appear if they deactivate
7 us. Otherwise know that they're destroying families,
8 children, because we have families. We have children
9 and you can imagine how New York can be so hard to
10 live. So, this is the only job we're doing.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

12 TIDIANE DIALIO: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

14 TAMER RASHDAN: My name is Tamer. I'm from
15 Egypt. I have been here for 24 years. I've been a
16 licensed TLC driver for 14 years. I'm here to
17 support the Play Octopus tablet in my car. I have
18 been with them for over four years. It creates
19 another stream for income. It creates a fun
20 environment and experience for riders, especially if
21 they are in crowd because they like to compete to see
22 who will get the most answers right.

23 Sometimes they ask me, I say I didn't grow up in
24 this country so I have no idea about you know most of
25 these things and I really think it's a good

1
2 opportunity to start the conversation with the
3 riders, especially when they see my profile and see
4 where I am from and my favorite food and my favorite
5 sport.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What's your favorite
7 sport?

8 TAMER RASHDAN: I'm sorry uh soccer because
9 Egypt. I mean the whole world would love soccer. We
10 breath soccer and I'd like also to speak for a minute
11 about the deactivation process. I was deactivated
12 after 40 years with Uber, having four-star rating
13 because based on a fake complaint by three young
14 ladies and I have the camera to prove it inside my
15 car, I offered the video to Uber. They refused to
16 see it on my own tablet.

17 And I hope that TLC can fix this problem by
18 having like a third party or uh some kind of - to see
19 the evidence and see if the driver actually you know
20 needs to be activated or not because this is our
21 livelihood and we have families and it just tough
22 being deactivated without even given a reason.
23 Without given the identity of the complaining person,
24 without any details, which is unfair for us and our
25 families. And thank you for listening.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: When and this –
3 anyone can answer this question. When you get
4 deactivated, do you immediately go to IDG?

5 TAMER RASHDAN: Yes, they have their own site, I
6 am deactivated.com. Yes.

7 TIDIANE DIALIO: Sorry, IDGs have never seen
8 someone who went to the IDG and – IDG, when you see
9 them, they're going to say okay, we will take it but
10 they will never go over that situation. That's why,
11 sorry, let me just tell you, I went somewhere to see
12 some job talking about the medallions and some of
13 them, you know what they did? They assaulted me
14 because they thought I was working for the IDG. They
15 say, never talk to us about medallions for driving
16 because IDG treat everybody – like working with Uber
17 and Lyft. Try to help them to do however they want
18 on driver. So, you cannot talk about IDG and I try
19 to tell them I'm not a member of IDG. IDG is
20 completely different. I have never been there. I
21 know everyone complain about IDG, so please listen to
22 me. This is not IDG.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And then, so when you
24 get deactivated, you then go to that website online.
25 Who controls that website IDG?

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2 TAMER RASHDAN: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay and then when
4 you put in your information and they reject it or
5 they –

6 TAMER RASHDAN: No, I'm sorry to interrupt. What
7 happens that they would talk with all the details and
8 they offer the video with the details to Uber. Uber
9 respond at their own discretion, which never happens
10 anyway. IDG cannot force Uber to say, hey you have
11 to look at this and this and this.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And when IDG and Uber
13 communicate about a claim, you're not a part of the
14 conversation?

15 TAMER RASHDAN: No. Well they do their part –

16 TIDIANE DIALIO: Also, they work for Uber. They
17 are actually work for our driver. Because IDG get
18 the money from Uber, Uber funded them. So, they are
19 part of Uber.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I am trying to
21 understand the process. So, for me, safety is
22 extremely important right? So, if there's an
23 accusation for example of violence, any type of
24 violence, I take that seriously. But if you're
25 saying you have evidence that proves otherwise and

1 just as an understanding what that process is and
2 what the timeline is to be able to dispute the claim?
3 And then how are you informed of your rights for the
4 next steps?
5

6 TIDIANE DIALIO: Let me answer that, sorry. When
7 it comes to that, IDG does not have any right. What
8 they do is they put in application to Uber to decide.
9 That takes you two years. Two years. I have about
10 five or six I have taken to IDG and it's up to date.
11 And it's not the deactivation, it's not justified.
12 You know when you want to prosecute somebody, you
13 must be able to tell the fact against the person.
14 You cannot tell me that somebody said. There must be
15 a justification proved beyond a reasonable doubt that
16 this person committed this crime. Then you can now
17 issue your verdict but what they do is they decide
18 whoever, whatever you think about, they will just
19 kick you out, lock you up. You have not assets and
20 that's why we're also asking, let us be part of this
21 hearing, so that they can listen to us and say your
22 opinion and then let the passenger also say. Because
23 sometimes let me tell you something what happens.
24 Some of the riders because they ask you to drop
25 somewhere which was not in the trip and then you

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1 refuse to drop there; to stop the passenger at that
2 spot and then they will call the Uber and make a
3 false accusation against you. That's a simple, it's
4 a simple thing. And that has been done, Uber will
5 now do is, it happened to me. Let me give an
6 example. I just, a lady asked me to stop, make a
7 stop so that she could buy a cup of tea and then drop
8 her off at her walking place. I said Ma'am, I cannot
9 do that. Please, what you can do is this. Change
10 the application, make the application so that I can
11 drop you there and then pick you up again to the last
12 stop. She said, no, she cannot do that. Then she
13 was angry. I said, Ma'am, I can only drop you at the
14 last stop. I dropped her. Then pick another person
15 from Brooklyn to Manhattan as I was dropping
16 somebody, Uber called me and said, were you sleeping?
17 I said, how can I be sleeping? I just dropped
18 somebody in Brooklyn, now I'm on my way to Manhattan.
19 The person I dropped at Manhattan give me ten dollars
20 tip because I was driving good. So, if I was
21 sleeping, how could someone from about ten miles away
22 and somebody I dropped for two miles complained I was
23 sleeping, just because of what I couldn't drop her
24 where she wanted me to drop her.
25

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3 So, she made an excuse and that one driver cost
4 two good years. I cannot law against my – so, they
5 forget about it. They understand that but with about
6 those new drivers, if that happened and driver would
7 kick him out and that would be the end of his, his
8 ending. That's not fair.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you sir. Thank
10 you. We're going to move to the next panel but
11 before we do, I'm going to have Council Member
12 Narcisse provide a short statement.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you Chair and
14 good afternoon, I mean good morning still I don't
15 know because I'm jumping from one Committee to
16 another one. The reason that I'm over there, I have
17 to come over here, as a daughter of a taxi driver for
18 so many years, I live on my you know that income.
19 So, and it is imperative for me to come here to show
20 the support but that's what we do here. We try to
21 strike a balance. We try to understand what's going
22 on in the City of New York. It's challenging for all
23 of us and those bills, that's what we do.

24 So, I appreciate my Chair. The question that I
25 had in my mind to ask as well, it's just like you
feel like this is not a fair process and we hear you.

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2 We're going to look into it and that's why we have a
3 bill like this to make sure that it is fair to you as
4 well. And I understand the family struggling because
5 when you're driving and it's a hard job. You have to
6 sit there for hours and hours and we'd like both
7 employer and employees to be fair. That's what we're
8 looking for. We're looking to strike a balance and
9 support our workers, yes.

10 TIDIANE DIALIO: Thank you ma'am.

11 TAMER RASHDAN: Any decision you make be applied
12 to the best deactivations or just starting from -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: We're listening to you.
14 We listen, we make sure we apply things where we're
15 supposed to apply. That where we are and then we are
16 a team that work together when a bill come, that's
17 when we listen to you. We want things to be fair.

18 TAMER RASHDAN: So, it can be applied to whatever
19 happened in the past. So, they can look into other
20 activity that already had been before that?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: We look for everything
22 but we're listening to you. We'll look through
23 things. We don't take things lightly at all. That's
24 what we do and my Chair is very strong. She petite
25 but she's strong and she's mighty in power. So, I

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2 thank you and we are here to support you, alright?

3 Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. For our next
5 panel, please come up Mohammed Mohiuddin, Richard
6 Chow, Ibrahim Zoure, Alexander Kuromchenko, Bassirou
7 Zebret, and Dacia Sangpo.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I just want to
9 reiterate the two-minute time limit please.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin please.

11 RICHARD CHOW: Hello. Hello Madam Chair and all
12 City Council Members and Councilman Shekar Krishnan
13 and thank you for listening to us. My name is
14 Richard Chow. I'm driving for yellow cab, I'm an
15 owner/driver. I'm proud to be New York Tax Worker
16 Alliance member and uhm, I'm very strong in support
17 to Councilman Shekar Krishnan's bill 1079. And this
18 is the bill. It's very important for us, for the
19 taxi driver because we have a lot of medallions owned
20 and the new copy made, the insurance and the guest
21 bill, maintenance. We have a family and with
22 household, with kids and raising kids through the
23 college. This is we have a working class you know
24 pay check to pay check to working hard in New York
25 City.

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2 So, it is very, very – give us a very, very low,
3 less than 40 percent we are already struggling. We
4 cannot accept the \$5.00 fare because they don't ever
5 pay the JFK like \$5.00 a charge then the rush hour.
6 LaGuardia Fare \$5.00. These are never paid. They're
7 supposed to be LaGuardia Fare is about \$50.00. They
8 pay us only \$25.00 and the New [INAUDIBLE 01:58:25]
9 is supposed to be paid like about \$70.00 plus the
10 \$20.00 surcharge. They never pay us the surcharge.

11 So, we need to fix – we have to support the
12 Council Member Shekar Krishnan bill. Thank you for
13 listening to us and thank you so much. Have a good
14 one, thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

16 RICHARD CHOW: You're welcome.

17 IBRAHIM ZOURE: Yeah, good afternoon. My name is
18 Ibrahim Zoure. I work for Uber and Lyft and I'm a
19 member of NYTWE. I'm here today to speak in my
20 behalf and the behalf of other drivers who was
21 victimized by Uber predatory deactivation process.
22 And I was deactivated in 2019 just to realize that I
23 have no job for a complaint that was made six months
24 before. And I was working one day, I tried to go on
25 my app and I couldn't do it. So, then I went to Uber

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3 office to find out what's going on with - to argue
4 about my case. Uber said, the office said that they
5 couldn't do nothing for me. I should go to IDG.

6 So, I went to IDG to see what they could do for
7 me and the agent at IDG took all the information and
8 told me that they was going to call me. They never
9 called me. Two weeks later I went back to them to
10 see what's going on with my case and they said well,
11 Uber did not give them any favorable answer to my
12 case. So, IDG did not solve my problem. So,
13 deactivation is a crisis because it destroys people's
14 confidence about themselves. As a driver, you're
15 going to work and you're not even sure if tomorrow
16 you're going to still have your job. For one year or
17 one, the passenger will report you and you get
18 deactivated. Meanwhile, you have all the expenses on
19 you. You go and take a loan for \$80,000 car,
20 \$100,000 car, just to be deactivated one week after.

21 So, you're bankrupt. Your credit is ruined and I
22 come to understand Uber is giving like an award to
23 their clients for reporting the driver. So, they
24 will give a credit to the facility for that, right?
25 And they will give the passenger a couple more trips
for free. So, it becomes fashionable for passenger

1
2 to get a free ride to just report anything on the
3 drivers. So, it's so much to say, my daughter asking
4 me, "daddy, why you not going to work?" I said,
5 well, I could not lie to her. I said I was
6 deactivated. She said what is deactivation? I said,
7 a client reported me and Uber blocked my account.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

9 IBRAHIM ZOURE: But she said, "you're a good man
10 daddy." I said, "Well I cannot go to work because of
11 that.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

13 MOHAMMED MOHIUDDIN: My name is -

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Turn the mic on
15 please. Press the button. Press the button.

16 MOHAMMED MOHIUDDIN: Hi, my name is Mohammed
17 Mohiuddin. Working for Uber and Lyft and my account
18 is blocked almost four years. I went two or three
19 times to Uber office and Lyft office. She don't give
20 me any reason. She said your account is closed but I
21 need to do the job. I have a family and I'm so
22 sorry, I don't speak - can I speak with a translator.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry, could you
24 stop touching the mic because it's impacting us being
25 able to hear you.

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3 MOHAMMED MOHIUDDIN: Okay, I need a translator.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You need a translator
5 sir?

6 MOHAMMED MOHIUDDIN: Can we start?

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You can start.

8 MOHAMMED MOHIUDDIN: SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE
9 [02:03:37]- [02:04:04].

10 TRANSLATOR: Hi, his name is Mohammed and he has
11 been working Lyft and Uber 15 and Lyft 16. They both
12 fired him in the name of deactivation. He went in
13 their office a few times and asked for the reason and
14 they never gave him the proper reason. So, he still
15 wants to know what did he do? Why he is deactivated.
16 That suffer his family and everybody else and look at
17 him, he's not a criminal you know.

18 So, please, this is a human crisis going on this
19 sector. Help us.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

21 TRANSLATOR: Alright, that's all. Thank you so
22 much.

23 BASSIROU ZEBRET: Hi, good morning. My name is
24 Bassirou Zebret. I'm a livery Uber and Lyft driver.
25 I was driving with Uber and Lyft six years ago.
After two weeks, Uber deactivated my account. Same

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1 thing with Lyft and I asked for the reason. They say
2 I have a low rating. So, I was to take the six hours
3 class and come back. I take six hours class and come
4 back, she says no but he removed me and I can't drive
5 again.

6
7 So, I have my car, I have my plates, I have to
8 pay my insurance. I have a family, I have to keep
9 care of my family but after six years, I don't have
10 an account to work. I don't know what I have to do.
11 So, I've been at the IDG, IDG say they're going to
12 help me. They open the case four years ago, nothing.
13 They let me know nothing. They say, you have to
14 wait. Wait for how long? I don't know. So, if you
15 can help me, let me know. I have to do something.
16 You keep my kids for four years and he has to do it
17 for what reason? So, I tried to change my email and
18 Lyft said no, it's a duplicate account, you can't
19 work. So, I said but what's the reason? I didn't do
20 nothing. So, don't help me so now I don't have my
21 car. How to do anything. The TLC ask you to renew
22 your license every two years. TLC ask you to do your
23 registration every two years and you have to pay the
24 bills, everything but you're not working. What do I
25 have to do?

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3 So, please if you can help me get something,
4 please. Thank you.

5 ALEXANDER KUROMCHENKO: Good morning. My name is
6 Alexander. I'm a cab driver. I want to say thank
7 you for your service and I want to take a look at the
8 history of New York City. The Taxi Medallion was
9 created because one had to leave the island and
10 there's a lot of people and there is no way to put
11 100,000 cabs inside the island. This is the reason
12 it was created, taxi medallion and to tax them with a
13 congestion fee, it's like insanity. The city created
14 taxi medallion. This is a city franchise. It's not
15 a private company. I have a great respect for Uber
16 drivers. I believe that you're innocent until proven
17 guilty. Nobody allowed to be punishment without
18 proving the crime but at the same time, I want to say
19 that the problem is not in loans. The problem is in
20 the business. When business is going to be alright,
21 the loan going to be paid. When there is no
22 business, no matter how much loan, it's never going
23 to be paid. So, I want to say thank you for your
24 time.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you. For
our next panel, we'll hear from excuse me, Kere

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1 Jolissa, Saifu Hoque, Mohammad Hogue, Naider Henry,
2 Mohammad Alvi, and I don't know if there's a second
3 Mohammed Alvi.
4

5 Sure, Mohammad Alvi, Naider Henry, Mohammad
6 Hoque, Saifu Hoque, Kere Jolissa. Please begin.

7 JOLISSA KERE: Hello, good morning. My name is
8 Jolissa Kere. My experience with Lyft and Uber the
9 client report me from Lyft and Uber and I lost my old
10 income. I'm not working with them anymore. I tried
11 to go to IDG and they didn't help me. Now, after
12 then, I went to work with [INAUDIBLE 02:10:08]. From
13 there to working in nothing and then after then, I'm
14 not doing nothing. It make me now - I cannot do
15 nothing from where I am now so I'm a single mom with
16 two kids. I don't have anybody to help me. I hope
17 this bill will help me go back to the road.

18 So, today I'm here to testify and I ask for you
19 guys if you can do something for us. I really need
20 this help and thank you for everything.

21 MOHAMMAD ALVI: My name is Mohammad Alvi. So,
22 good afternoon to everyone. There is enough for two
23 reasons for I am here. First of all Uber deactivated
24 my account. The second reason is Octopus. The first
25 of all Uber deactivated my account like 2021, July 9

1
2 because they said that some customer complained
3 against me and when I asked him, what is the reason?
4 He said the complaint against your sexual harassment.

5 Okay, so I said, so he have any evidence. He
6 says no. But do you have evidence you can provide
7 us? I said, if I provide the evidence, but you ask
8 the rider if he have any evidence to give me, to show
9 me. What is the reason. Without any reason, Uber
10 don't reactivate my account because he's just only
11 the reason of the one customer complaint. Because
12 that time, four senior trying to hit me and I ran
13 from there. But after that, he complained against me
14 and they deactivate account since two years and three
15 months.

16 I have a family. Not anyone inside the home to
17 earning the money. I am the only person. So,
18 suggestions to, if Uber deactivated my account first
19 of all inform to TLC. TLC investigate about the
20 case, then to do the processing of the deactivations.
21 So, second reason, the Octopus. Octopus is a really
22 good tablet. They're giving good entertainments.
23 They like the sports, and family entertainments if
24 there's family inside the car. They're giving
25 different type of sports. The different type of the

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1 entertainment and like better, like locations. So,
2 everything in the one panel is showing that in the
3 one tablet. So, it's also the Octopus giving some
4 money to the drivers because the driver is through
5 this money can change and so many things like small
6 things.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

9 MOHAMMAD ALVI: Yeah, thank you.

10 MOHAMMAD MOHIUDDIN: Good afternoon. -

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Could you turn on your mic?

12 MOHAMMAD MOHIUDDIN: Hi, good afternoon Council
13 Members. So, I'm expecting - I have a problem with
14 my deactivation with my Uber and Lyft account, both
15 of them. Lyft closed like more than a year and Uber
16 is almost six months. IDG said they don't have
17 anything else. They say they're investigating the
18 case or something like that. But the reasons that
19 some customers complain I used a drug substance. I
20 went to the office, I give them my doctors by TLC and
21 by special my doctors and they don't listen to
22 anything else. They are just giving me time and
23 time, almost four months. I'm hanging around. They
24 don't reason nothing else.
25

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1
2 And right now my situations been bad because I
3 bought an \$18,000 accessible car by loan. I'm paying
4 every month \$1,400 and I can't pay the rent and my
5 landlord and I have two kids. But I'm really
6 starting to have a bad situation and maybe you know
7 my mental depression, you know this has been a bad
8 depression for me. I can't pay my rent. I can't pay
9 my bills. I can't pay my bank mortgage. This is a
10 very horrible situation for my life. So, anything
11 could happen anytime because I'm very in depression.
12 And I have diabetes, my wife is sick also she can't
13 work full-time, so there's the problem. So, I hope
14 your bill will be helpful for us and try to help us
15 but most of drivers happen sudden like that.

16 So, thanks for your help and I hope you'll be a
17 solution very soon please. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you sir.

19 NAIDER HENRY: My name is Naider Henry. I'm a
20 member of NYTWA. I am here to ask you to support the
21 1079 because this bill will help me, help us because
22 I mean you look [02:15:45] and if I don't have to pay
23 the meter, I cannot pay my bill. That's why most of
24 the time, I don't pick up the curb e-hail because e-
25 hail, they don't pay you exactly the amount they're

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1 supposed to pay. And I am losing money because my
2 own system gets \$70,000. So far my lender don't want
3 to help. My union NYTW tried to do their best to
4 find a way. They asked me to pay \$200,000. They are
5 going to give me - if I can come up with \$200,000, I
6 don't have that kind of money. Because I feel like
7 anything can help. You were talking about the
8 congestion prices, this is money they're going to
9 take from us, from the yellow cab. And I've been in
10 that business 28 years. This is a disaster for us.
11 Since Uber and Lyft come, I don't have nothing
12 against them but since they come they bring the
13 medallion price down, down, down. And now I end up
14 with a bill with \$670,000. What can I do? The only
15 choice I got now is go bankruptcy if the city don't
16 help. Because the city can do nothing with the
17 owner. The owner, they do whatever they want. They
18 charge you, right now, I don't even receive a
19 statement from the owner. I try to pay right now but
20 in the end, I don't have no choice if they don't do
21 nothing for me. I will have to go bankruptcy.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I do have
24 a quick follow-up question for you. Are you
25 participating in the Medallion programs?

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2 INFRASTRUCTURE

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3 NAIDER HENRY: I do everything you know. The
4 lender deny. The lender don't want to do anything.
5 The \$20,000 MRP, the \$30,000. I do everything. They
6 don't do anything. I don't know what to tell you
7 about that. They don't do anything but the union is
8 fighting. The union have a goal. It try to see if
9 they can find somebody to come over because they
10 asked me to pay \$200,000 but I don't have it.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

12 NAIDER HENRY: If you can find somebody, they can
13 take all the medallions from its owner because those
14 lenders, they don't try to do anything to work with
15 TLC to see if we can - they have 200,000 taxi
16 medallion. They have more than 570 we don't have no
17 help. What can we do for those taxi who don't have
18 no help?

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. For our next
21 panel, we'll hear from Cara Liebowitz, Yang Weng,
22 Saif Aizah, Wain Chin, MD Golam Kibria, and MD Azizul
23 Haque. Please proceed.

24 WAIN CHIN: Hi, good afternoon Madam Chair and
25 Council Members. My name is Wain Chin, member of
NYTWA. I am in favor and wholeheartedly support

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1 Intro. 1079 and also I'm a medallion taxi yellow
2 owner. I've been driving since '92 something like
3 that and we need to pay deposit because the e-hail
4 flex pay the offer is usually 20-40 percent fare
5 because we need the fare meter rate because we our
6 expense very high. You know living cost is high.
7 Our operating cost is high and you know we have to
8 pass this bill because as a medallion owner, we have
9 a mortgage, we get expense and you know as an owner,
10 we still have a mortgage. Myself, my loan won't
11 stretch out, so we had a high out cost, so we had to
12 park this babe because it pays very low, less than
13 like 20 to 40 percent below the median rate. So, we
14 have to pass the bill so that we can survive. We can
15 support our family because as I say, I have a kid
16 going to college. You know we have to pay a lot of
17 expenses.

18
19 So, we need to pass this bill so we can pay for
20 our family, for our cab you know. You know the
21 inflation is so high right? The car used to cost
22 \$30,000, now its \$74,000. You know we need to pass
23 the bill in line with our cost expense. Thank you so
24 much for listening to us.

25 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

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1 SAIF AIZAH: My name is Saif Aizah. I am
2 medallion owner. I think our protest here but I
3 protest a lot from the front of City Hall. Party
4 sees this and I am hunger strike. I am medallion
5 owner. I bought this medallion in 2014, \$851,000.
6 So, I cannot afford my medallion. One month before I
7 cannot pay my mortgage. Bank took my medallion

8 Right now, I cannot drive my medallion is stored
9 in TLC but I cannot work. I have no money. Right
10 now, I want to drive one of parents, so last week,
11 one day I am driving and suddenly call Uber but one
12 and two passenger, I cannot exit. Suddenly next, I
13 saw one of the passengers, I cannot take. My middle
14 is stop. What happened? I called the TLC, TLC told
15 me wait, wait. And then a few minutes, they told me
16 you are unable to [INAUDIBLE 2:23:18], it does not
17 work.

18 Have it not work, then I cannot - I don't
19 explain. So, my medallion is stored and I pay. Why
20 they took my medallion I don't know, so one month
21 before, almost month, they cannot give me back my
22 medallion. My mortgage is more than \$700,000. So,
23 please help us. I want to work this city nicely. I
24 am here, a driver, please help us.
25

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3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

4 MD AZIZUL HAQUE: Thank you Madam Chair. Good
5 afternoon. My name is Mohammad Azizul Haque and I'm
6 an owner/driver of FHV and I'm a member NYTWA. And
7 first of all, I would like to thank you all for your
8 unconditional support for the driver, especially Mr.
9 Shekar Krishnan. I'm from his district, so I know
10 him personally also, so thank you for your service.
11 You guys did the best for us during our strike, our
12 movement, everywhere.

13 So, I am here to testify about our Intro. bill,
14 Bill Intro. 1078 on unfair deactivation. I got
15 deactivated about 2019 by the Uber. So, they had a
16 process to go through. I tried to go through their
17 process. I called their corporate office. Also,
18 they have a set up at like IDG organization who do
19 those things. But I tried it but I have no contact
20 with them. They never called me but since I joined
21 this Taxi Worker Alliance and I was on the movement
22 for the drivers also. So, they know me personally
23 also, they saw my face.

24 Right now, I don't see they have any intention to
25 help me out. Sometimes they even bullied me, they
insulted me. I believe the loss of other drivers

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1 went through same way. But the real reason that we
2 need this bill, that is really important. I support
3 my family and myself also on this job and Uber is the
4 only app companies who held the more passenger really
5 start on their app and the passenger reviews their
6 services. I'm working with other no problem but the
7 reason they deactivated me is unknown. They said
8 that I broke their community guideline. I tried to
9 call them. I tried to get the specific reason. I
10 was unable to get to and I was not getting any help
11 also from them, from the associate. So, I really
12 want to see this bill on the table and we need
13 official heading on this issue.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

16 MD AZIZUL HAQUE: Thank you so much.

17 MD GOLAM KIBRIA: Thank you all. My name is MD
18 Golam Kibria. I'm working with Uber more than six
19 years. My starting is 4.87, customer receive 92
20 percent and cancellation is 2 percent only and I told
21 the customer like more than 1,000. After six years,
22 the Uber, deactivated my account and I have the proof
23 here, only 13 people give me one star and two people
24 give me two star. Three people give me two star and

25

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1
2 four people give me three star and all other give me
3 five star.

4 So, my question, sometimes we work like midnight
5 and some places you know it's like Brooklyn, it's
6 like Bronx some places, all customer not same, so
7 midnight when we work, so sometimes we try to help
8 the rider and sometimes we scared because, safety is
9 first. And then suddenly the Uber deactivated my
10 account, then I called them, what happened? Why you
11 guys deactivated my account? And they said you have
12 multiple complaint from the ride. So, I said, I
13 don't know about that and the complaint and which
14 rider give the complaint, I don't know. You need to
15 provide to me who complaint, I can explain about the
16 complaint. The Uber working in the field? Uber team
17 then work in the field and they never know about the
18 field. They just stay in the office and whatever
19 they get the email, text, this system not work. So,
20 this is really unfair. So, please help us. Let us
21 work. Our city, our government spend more than \$3
22 million for the people. They're helping us but Uber,
23 they work - the city, our government. So, I believe
24 this is really unfair. Please help us. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

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1 CARA LIEBOWITZ: Good afternoon. My name is Cara
2 Liebowitz, Advocacy Coordinator for the Brooklyn
3 Center for Independence of the Disabled. BCID is a
4 disability led, independent living center with a
5 mission of advocating for the independence of all
6 people with disabilities. We are a long-time member
7 of the Taxis For All Campaign.
8

9 We have three points to make today. First, the
10 TLC has failed to keep its end of a landmark legal
11 settlement, the Taxis For All Campaign made in 2013,
12 which required 50 percent of yellow taxis to be
13 wheelchair accessible by 2020.

14 Since then, a decade has passed and in spite of
15 an extension we gave the TLC in 2021, the city has
16 not reached the 50 percent mark. Instead, only 42
17 percent of yellow taxis in service are accessible and
18 just 32 percent of the total fleet. The TLC informed
19 us that it would not meet its new 2023 deadline. We
20 urge the Council to pass legislation requiring 100
21 percent of all yellow taxis and all for-hire vehicles
22 to be accessible, not just at 50 percent. The TLC
23 should use the Taxi Improvement Surcharge so that
24 every new taxi on the road is accessible no later
25 than 2027.

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3 Second, the Council must push the TLC to require
4 accessible electric vehicles, instead of pushing
5 forward with its flawed Green Rides Proposal. The
6 TLCs plan would require a transition to a fully
7 electric seat for for-hire vehicles by 2030 accepting
8 a small handful of accessible vehicles.

9 The TLC made the proposal without discussion with
10 the disability community and drivers don't appear to
11 have been consulted either. In the attached letter,
12 we and 11 other disability and transportation groups
13 called on the TLC to take a different approach. It
14 should use its influence to get vehicle manufacturers
15 to design and produce a full accessible electric
16 vehicle. Immediately move to reduce the current
17 response time requirement, so that when I call an
18 accessible Uber, I get it in the same amount of time
19 as anyone else.

20 The Council must ask for TLC about its driver,
21 it's training of drivers to secure people in their
22 wheelchairs. How often it inspects securements and
23 how it's working with drivers to overcome language
24 barriers. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you and for
those who have testified today and will testify, we

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3 encourage you to also include your testimony in
4 writing.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. For our next
6 panel, we'll hear from Walter Hurdle, Alli Langley,
7 Haitham Irgibat, Zoundi Noel Sinaplice, Tul Prasad
8 Sunar, Gobin Sunar. Please begin.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Good afternoon everyone. I am a
10 Lyft Driver since 2019. When I drive the Lyft, the
11 reason the complaining with me and uh they
12 deactivated my account. So, thank you. That's all.

13 GOBIN SUNAR: Good afternoon. My name is Gobin
14 Sunar. My Uber account deactivated, so please help
15 me on my account. Thank you.

16 WALTER HURDLE: Good morning. My name is Walter
17 Hurdle and I am a New York Taxi Worker Alliance
18 member okay. I'd like to thank the panel for taking
19 out the time to hear us out and I would like to
20 formerly apologize to all of the drivers here.
21 Because this wasn't important to me until it hit
22 home.

23 So, I've been an Uber Lyft Driver for five years,
24 five star across the board. There's been a few times
25 I've been deactivated and with some explanations and
proof. I was reactivated. Recently, I had a

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1 situation with Uber who I merely complimented a
2 driver on how they looked and I don't know what that
3 passenger said. I don't know what she said, but I
4 was deactivated. I had camera footage. I had all my
5 evidence to prove that whatever she may have said,
6 didn't happen. They didn't want to hear it. I'm
7 here because of the unfair deactivations because
8 passengers have too much leverage. They have too
9 much, anything that they'll say or do just to get a
10 free ride.
11

12 I could leave here with either one of your four
13 panel members. We can get into an Uber or Lyft car,
14 go six blocks away, never say a word to the driver,
15 get out and complain and say, the driver made a
16 disparaging comment about gay and lesbians. Within
17 15 minutes, that driver is deactivated. Just like
18 that.

19 So, my thing is, there needs to be an independent
20 review panel board you know that can hear out the
21 passenger side and the drivers side you know before
22 they make a determination and deactivate a driver. I
23 got deactivated for a flat tire, a flat tire. I'm
24 like, I can't drive the car with three wheels. I
25

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1
2 have to put a tire back on the car. Why would you
3 have to deactivate me?

4 Well, we have to deactivate you until we can get
5 a picture of all four wheels to show that you have
6 four wheels on the car. So, like I said, there's too
7 much leverage you know for the passengers to complain
8 and it's not enough ammunition for the drivers to
9 defend themselves, even with a camera in the car. I
10 have a camera in the car, it doesn't make a
11 difference. So, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

13 ALLI LANGLEY: Good afternoon. My name is Alli
14 Langley. I'm a Staff Attorney at the New York Taxi
15 Workers Alliance.

16 First, I would like to echo the call of many
17 drivers that we need a hearing about Intro. 1078 as
18 soon as possible. You've heard directly from the
19 folks most impacted by this crisis. It's urgent,
20 it's widespread and drivers need protections as soon
21 as possible.

22 Second, I would also like to speak in support of
23 Intro. 1079. Drivers have already spoken about the
24 need for getting paid metered rates for e-hail trips.
25 So, I would like to focus on the TLCs position on the

1 matter. First, when Flex Fare was authorized
2 initially as a pilot program, the TLC was supposed to
3 do regular reports because they knew that this could
4 have a significant impact both on the industry as a
5 whole and driver income.
6

7 In fact, in their first report they found that
8 Flex Fares were up to 20 percent less than the
9 metered rate and they ended the report by
10 recommending the passage of driver pay standards.
11 The TLC subsequently failed to issue any of the other
12 reports or finalize rules that have protected drivers
13 or officially codified the Flex Fare program.

14 After Council Member Krishnan introduced this
15 bill, the TLC and at the last minute, issued a report
16 saying that Flex Fare did not negatively impact
17 driver income. However, there are significant flaws
18 with this report. This Committee asked the TLC about
19 them today and the TLC simply had no response. So,
20 just to reiterate what those flaws are.

21 First per the report, the large majority of trips
22 that are dispatched on e-hails are paid under the
23 meter rate. That's at page 3, table 1. Instead of
24 analyzing this or providing any discussion about how
25 it would impact drivers for most of these trips to be

1 underpaid, the TLC obscured it by relying on
2 averages. And it's worth noting that these averages
3 seem to be inflated because there is one single
4 provider who provides only a small fraction of the
5 trips whose average revenue is significantly higher
6 than the other providers, about two dollars higher.
7

8 Just quickly, in addition, the report doesn't
9 include trips dispatched from Uber. It only looks at
10 the per distance and not per time revenue, as raised
11 earlier by this Committee and it also looks at data
12 from both before and after the fare raise.

13 These are significant flaws that the TLC has to
14 address and that their conclusion that Flex Fare does
15 not impact driver income simply cannot be relied
16 upon.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

18 ALLI LANGLEY: Thank you.

19 ZOUNDI NOEL SINAPLICE: Good afternoon, my name
20 is Noel Zoundi. I've been working with Uber six
21 years and I made like 19,000 trips. So, I was
22 deactivated by Uber last year. So, I wake up in the
23 morning, they put my account on hold, so I call Uber
24 Super, they told me I got a suspension in my DNV
25 license.

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3 So, three days later, they sent me an email again
4 saying I have a customer report me one year ago. So,
5 I went to EDC, they told me they don't understand why
6 Uber can bring this customer complaint from one year
7 ago. So, till now, I've been deactivated. So, if
8 TLC can do something for driver to help us. That's
9 why I was here. Alright, thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. For our next
11 panel, we'll hear from Michael Pollard, Joseph Bamba,
12 Yeldar Mukhtaruly, Ivan E. Garcia, Edwin Garcia and
13 Mudasiru Kamil.

14 MICHAEL POLLARD: Good afternoon. I'm Michael
15 Pollard. I am a rideshare driver, both Uber and Lyft
16 driver in the State of Connecticut and I'm here to
17 support sorry - Intro. 1139.

18 I've been driving for Uber and Lyft since March
19 of 2021 and I have been - I've discovered, actually I
20 discovered Play Octopus as of last year at this time
21 and it has significantly boost my like productivity
22 and morale. While doing [INAUDIBLE 02:40:03] and
23 yes, I wanted to support Intro. 1139. Also, I also
24 support the bill that's for the deactivation process.
25 Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

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3 MUDASIRU KAMIL: Good morning. My name is
4 Mudasiru Kamil. I'm here to make a complaint about
5 my account for deactivation.

6 I have been working since 2015, sorry since 2015-
7 and training October 2019. I got deactivated 2020
8 after I got a new car from the dealer company in 2020
9 and I got deactivated. So, I made a complaint to
10 IDG. They said they would look into it. For a long
11 time, I didn't hear from them. Uhm, the problem, I
12 asked, I texted them, I asked them why did that get
13 deactivated? They said, there's a fraud on my
14 account. I said, what? It's me driving.

15 So, after that, a few years I'm on a trip to
16 Africa. So, after I came back, I went straight to
17 the office to see if I heard from them. I showed
18 them why and I traveled and that's the reason why I
19 didn't counsel early and they said no, they
20 deactivated and prevent me.

21 So, a few years later, somewhere in June, Lyft
22 too deactivated me. So, it's been almost three years
23 now. I've been there without working. I've been
24 struggling for car and the insurance so no chance on
25 me now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

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1 EDWIN GARCIA: Thank you so much. Good evening
2 Council. My name is Edwin Garcia and I've been
3 driving TLC driver from ten years ago. So, I'm here
4 to support Intro. 1139 from Council Farias and I
5 discovered Play Octopus a few years ago, like three
6 years ago and I recommend that outlet for different
7 drivers. And Play Octopus is the best tablet
8 entertainment for my passengers. Every passenger
9 loves it and it's one of the best extra money we can
10 make driving in the city. Thank you so much.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

12 IVAN GARCIA: Good afternoon, my name is Ivan
13 Garcia. I am driver a couple of years ago. A couple
14 of years ago, two years of the tablets in my car.
15 I'm here because I'm in support of the Intro. 1139
16 for the Council Member Farias. I use this tablet in
17 my car because they have an opportunity, extra to
18 cover repairs, washing the cars. Uhm, and the
19 passenger, they love it. When you take a ride or
20 drive on the East Side to the city and take a long
21 time, the passenger inside the car, sometimes they
22 little be angry to the traffic sometimes. So, they
23 try to enforce and to doing something in the city to
24 broken the rules. Fast in the corner or you go - I
25

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3 go late, you're doing more fast, so this app, this
4 tablet, they to help the passenger to take it easy in
5 the car. They you know the travel, they more uh, uh,
6 uh, easy or stressing when you take the passenger,
7 they have kids inside the car, so they help us to the
8 drivers. Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 JOSEPH BAMBA: Hi, my name is Joseph Bamba. I've
11 been driving New York City Taxi for 20 years. I was
12 deactivated by Uber for they give me few reasons,
13 which some of them don't even apply to me, on me.
14 Because the first time I went to them, they said I
15 had to go to IDG somewhere in Brooklyn. I went, I
16 tell them, they put out some note and they said
17 they're going to do something about it.

18 Unfortunately, I didn't get any feedback. I want
19 back and nothing.

20 The first time Uber was able to tell me a reason,
21 it was that they said that I was drunk. I tell Uber
22 unfortunately, that does not apply to me. I don't
23 drink. I never drink in my life due to my culture
24 and religious belief. It's not my thing. I have
25 never done it. There's no way I can be drunk.

Whenever there anything else you probably have, can I

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1 know? They said, oh we don't have anything. Maybe
2 you need to go back to IDG. I said, I've been there
3 before but I will keep them after and staff. And
4 another time, they tell me that I was deactivated
5 really because a passenger complained that I refused
6 to pick up his service dogs. I'm like well, since I
7 have my Uber, can you give me at least a date, time
8 and location? And they give me a date, which I
9 actually remember exactly because they give me a date
10 and time. The passenger was on Long Island on
11 Creston Street, Long Island City Queens area, no
12 that's Astoria the area I was. The lady come with a
13 very small you know these little dogs. At night it
14 was around - that was Friday night around 11:00 p.m.
15 very heavy rain that day. She covered up - the were
16 standing with an umbrella that was down. When I got
17 there, she said, "Well, I have a dog can I?" I said
18 sure.

19
20 "Well Ma'am can you keep it on your lap since you
21 know it's raining and it was on the floor just to
22 protect the seat?" Because she didn't have anything
23 like a blanket. Some of them have that. She said,
24 "I told you it's a service dog." I said, "Here, just
25 can you keep it on your lap? It's a little dog."

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1 She said, you know what? She used the F-word and
2 slammed the door back.
3

4 I'm like- but because of that, I still have to
5 work because Uber gives us a minute to wait before
6 you can press like no show, like passenger didn't
7 come in anything. I cannot leave unless that time is
8 due. I'm standing there, she keep you know nagging
9 on my car, move. I just said, "ma'am I move up a
10 little bit." Because you know she was hitting the
11 car.

12 I didn't know, I began to worry about her mental
13 state because I just say keep it on your lap and
14 slammed the door and use the F-word. I never met you
15 before. I don't know you. I don't know why this
16 type of action is. So, that was the last time. I
17 tell Uber, okay, can we meet with this person? She
18 was like, "Oh, no you were deactivated before and now
19 you're permanently deactivated." I said, "What did I
20 do before I was drunk according to you guys, which I
21 never did in my life, not for you or for Uber. This
22 is just me, that's my life, personal life."

23 So, I'm here today on behalf of many other
24 drivers that I have been deactivated for multiple
25 unfair reasons. Because why mostly I will say

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2 unfair, such reasons as I am drunk. I never drink.

3 It makes no sense.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. For our next
6 panel, we'll hear from Basi M. Khareef, Malang
7 Gassama, Marouna Chernob, Raj B. Khatri, Mohosin
8 Chowdhury, Raul Rivera and Christopher Leon Johnson.

9 MAROUNA CHERNO: Good afternoon everybody. Okay,
10 my name is Marouna Chernob. I was driving Uber since
11 2015. I drive 31,948 trips with Uber. So, I never
12 have - I'm a driver who is one of the 70 drivers.
13 Since I get TLC license, I never has a ticket from
14 TLC, never.

15 Since 2019, I never have any ticket because of
16 safety because I know I have family. I have seven
17 children under age, under 18. So, last time Uber
18 deactivated me, I called them and asked them why?
19 They said somebody complained to you, a lady, you
20 sexually harassed her.

21 I said, "Okay, where?" I tell them what
22 happened. I took her from the Bronx to Manhattan
23 then the exit where we are, she wanted me to take her
24 to the next exit. "I said, no, I'm not able to take
25 you to that exit, you're going over here."

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1 So, that's the reason when I exit 161 Street
2 and Macomb's Dam Bridge, I drop her on [INAUDIBLE
3 02:50:51]. She had been asking me to drop her on 149
4 and 149 does not even have an exit on south. I only
5 have exit on 138. I said, "I'm not able to take you
6 over there because your destination is here."
7 Because somebody call in the Uber for her, she not
8 able to take me to this destination? When I dropped
9 her to the address, she asked on the app that's why
10 she complaining to me. So, they deactivated me.

12 Also, Lyft now has deactivated me because of Uber
13 deactivated me. I called and I do everything I can.
14 So, this is what the problem I have. Like my rent is
15 more than \$2,000 because I have large family. I have
16 like three girls and four boys. They are going to be
17 in decent room. I have three bedroom. I pay my
18 bills.

19 So, now I'm not working. It's very depressing
20 when you kids like four of your kids ask you, "Dad,
21 why you not go to work?" I say, "How can I work?"
22 That's a bad example to your children. They ask you
23 why you're not going to work. Why you are not doing
24 nothing.

25 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

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1 MOROUNA CHERMO: I'm not doing anything illegal
2 and one thing I want to make to Uber, if anything
3 leading to a crime, let them take it to the court of
4 law. They can have court of law. Why they not take
5 the case over there because if it's there, everybody
6 have right, everybody can talk. But in the Uber
7 case, nobody have right, only what they want to do.
8 Make people in my car because I'm driver, personal
9 driver, I don't care about it because I know it's
10 part of my job. Sometimes you have something what
11 you don't need in your job but when you call Uber for
12 having complaint, they're going to hassle you more
13 than the passenger hassle you. That's not good.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you sir.

15 MAROUNA CHERMO: That's just not good.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you sir.

17 MAROUNA CHERMO: Alright, thank you.

18 MALANG GASSAMA: Good afternoon Madam Chairman.
19 Good afternoon Council Members. My name is Malang
20 Gassama. I've been driving with Uber for over — I
21 mean I drove for Uber for nine years, over 24,000
22 trips with a diamond status and I am a member of the
23 NYTWA.
24

25

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1 On April 28, I was verbally assaulted by a
2 customer, an Uber rider who called me a stupid
3 African, a stupid Black Driver and then physically
4 assaulted by pepper spray by the same customer and
5 then right away I complained to Uber, I mean I
6 reported to Uber with camera footages of what
7 happened. Uber even sent me \$20.00 to go wash my
8 car, so I can get the pepper spray off my car. And
9 then they promised they were going to deactivate the
10 customer from their platform. Which uh, the next
11 day, Uber called me saying that the customer
12 complained that their life was in danger with me,
13 which was not true.

14 And because of that, they're going to deactivate
15 my account temporarily until I can prove them
16 otherwise but they're going to give me a week. Which
17 I did, I went to the police to get the police report.
18 I uhm, I also requested for the camera footage
19 because where the incident happened, under that
20 building there was much more cameras there. So, I
21 went to ask for the camera footage but it took me the
22 time to get the footage from the police, which went
23 over the week that Uber said they gave me. But when
24 they said they give me the week, I was happy because
25

1
2 I thought when they do the investigation then they
3 will find out that this customer was lying.

4 So, I don't know what kind of investigation they
5 did but after a week they permanently deactivated me.
6 I didn't want go at first to IDG because I've heard
7 multiple complaints about IDG from drivers and also,
8 I've noticed that I've been getting a lot of emails
9 from IDG asking me to buy stuff. So, I felt like IDG
10 is there to just take money from me instead of
11 helping me get money. So, I didn't want to go at
12 first to them but then after a while I decided that
13 you know before I can rely on what's here say, I
14 should go myself.

15 So, I went myself to IDG, so currently my case is
16 at IDG just to show you guys that they're not helping
17 drivers. They claim they are but they are not
18 because they're not helping me and they have every
19 legal detail that they need to help me including the
20 evidences to show Uber that this customer was lying
21 which they're still not helping me.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you sir. If
23 you could just send the rest in writing, we can see
24 the remainder of the testimony.

25 MALANG GASSAMA: Sure, not a problem.

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1 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

2 MALANG GASSAMA: You're welcome.

3 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Good afternoon. My
4 name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I heard these
5 testimonies with these drivers. I believe it about
6 the abuses they get from the apps. Now, the problem
7 is like this Committee hearing is really no point
8 because you have a few of these Council Members and I
9 think everybody know who they are, they're captive to
10 Uber because of Trans All and open plans. So, they
11 really expect these Council Members to fight and try
12 to really advocate for the taxi workers, even the
13 members of TWA and the IDG, because like I said, it
14 could be as many of the leadership that's really the
15 issue with a lot of these organizations. It's going
16 to be impossible and the thing we got to do is we got
17 to get Trans All out of the way. We got to get open
18 plans out of the way. This conversation is not going
19 to go forward with Trans All and the open plans in
20 the way because open plans and Trans All owns the
21 City Council. They got the City Council in their
22 pocket. So, nothing is going to be accomplished.
23 Like these guys are going to keep on being screwed
24 until something - one of these guys come with the car
25

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2 and crash the City Hall and then shoot themselves in
3 the head. That's the only way it's going to go
4 forward but all despite - this is the truth and these
5 guys are getting screwed by both of these
6 organizations and that's what's happening. It's the
7 wrong people leading the charge. They're all in the
8 hands of Trans All. They're going to be there on
9 Monday to Riders Alliance Gala, which is a joke and
10 that's what's going to go down.

11 So, until like I said, somebody go and shoot
12 themselves in the head outside of City Hall, this
13 conversation will not go forward because all this
14 stuff is just nothing but BS talk. And I'm going to
15 say this right now, last two seconds Inna Vernikov
16 need to resign from City Council. She need to be
17 expelled from City Council for carrying that gun
18 outside the Palestinian rally yesterday. It was
19 disgusting. We need to get rid of the guns in New
20 York City. Having a Council Member doing that crap
21 yesterday was disgusting and all the Councilmen
22 should be called for resignation for Inna Vernikov.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

25

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3 RAUL RIVERA: Good afternoon. My name is Raul
4 Rivera. I am a TLC Driver and a TLC Driver Advocate.
5 I'm the Founder of NYC Drivers Unite. The only group
6 in New York City seeking to reform of the Tax
7 Limousine Commission. We also go to court suing
8 against Taxi Limousine Commission. We want to say
9 that we support Intro. 1078. We also support 1139
10 but we don't support Octopus.

11 There's so many things that I want to say. I
12 wanted to touch on cobalt, I'm going to pass on that.
13 We also reserve our thoughts and our judgement on
14 1192. We want to know more about it. Deactivations
15 are high and we know why but I want to touch on this.
16 I want to touch on scooters throughout the city,
17 motorcycles. This puts the driver in danger. If you
18 get hit by one of these things, you're going to have
19 serious problems when it comes to the insurance
20 companies. We offer legal migration. 90 percent of
21 drivers are immigrants. We support immigrants. We
22 support legal migration. We want these bikes off the
23 road. We want all the Council Members to sign on to
24 Intro. 758. It's very important that we get that
25 bill passed to protect the drivers in the city and
New Yorkers. This is a safety for all New Yorkers.

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3 You know, I'll leave it there. I'll leave it
4 there. If you have any questions on deactivations, I
5 can touch on that.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. If we
8 have inadvertently missed anyone that has registered
9 to testify today and has yet to have been called,
10 please use the Zoom hand function if you are
11 testifying remotely and you will be called in the
12 order that your hand has been raised. And if you are
13 testifying in person, please come to the dais.

14 Seeing no one, I will now turn it over to Chair
15 Brooks-Powers for closing remarks.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, as we close out
17 our very final hearing. Sam, we just want to once
18 again say uhm, thank you for your service to the City
19 of New York. Thank you for seeing it all the way
20 through literally this is your last day and we wanted
21 to make sure that this hearing, you were able to take
22 part in because you worked so hard on this issue with
23 us, getting to this day where there's a number of
24 great bills that we were able to hear today and other
25 bills that we will consider coming forward.

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1
2 We have a cake for you downstairs and we have
3 this as well. But thank you Sam for your service
4 once again.

5 With that, we will consider this hearing closed.

6 [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date OCTOBER 28, 2023