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NEW YORK CITY
TAXI & LIMOUSINE COMMISSION
TAXI METER RATE OF FARE HEARING

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May 23, 2022
10:10 a.m.

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

B E F O R E:
RYAN WANTTAJA,
ACTING COMMISSIONER AND CHAIR

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A P P E A R A N C E S :

TLC COMMISSIONERS

RYAN WANTTAJA, Acting Commissioner

BILL AGUADO, Commissioner

THOMAS SORRENTINO, Commissioner

STEVE KEST, Commissioner

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MR. WANTTAJA: Good morning.

I'm acting Commissioner Ryan Wanttaja, and I am joined today by Commissioners Sorrentino, Aguado and Kest, as well as several TLC staff members listening in and taking notes.

I'm excited to be here today for our public hearing on the Taxi Meter Rate of Fare. As many of you know, it's been over a decade since the TLC has adjusted the taxi meter rate of fare, so I'm very glad that we are getting to the long overdue work of readjusting it to reflect drivers' expenses as they exist today.

We have an incredibly lengthy list of speakers, and I'm glad to have so many people engaged in this process. So I'll keep my list of housekeeping items short.

First, today's hearing is about the taxi meter rate of fare and items that the Commission should consider when setting the taxi meter rate of

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fare. Our hearing on FHV Driver Pay is tomorrow, so if you are waiting to testify about FHV Driver Pay, I'd ask that you save your testimony for tomorrow.

You are welcome to testify today and tomorrow, if you have information on both tax expenses and FHV expenses. But given the distinctions between the industries, it will be helpful for our work here if we keep the discussion today focused on expenses related to taxi operations. And then we can focus tomorrow on expenses related to driving and FHV.

Second, in addition to testifying today and providing written comments to us, the most helpful thing you can do to ensure that TLC has all the information it needs to set the taxi meter rate of fare, is to fill out the driver expense survey TLC is sending out to all licensees today. Any adjustments we make to the meter

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rate of fare needs to be based on data surrounding expenses, income, driver and vehicle supply and the like. And this survey is one of the main ways we will be collecting that data. If you want to ensure your voice is heard in our rate setting, please, please fill out that survey.

And finally, due to the lengthy list of people who have signed up to speak today, we are limiting testimony to two minutes. As always, you are more than welcome to supplement your testimony today with written comments, which you can send to TLC rules at TLC dot NYC dot GOV.

Since we are just in the information gathering stage of setting the rates of fare, there is no hard deadline to submit additional comments. Following this week's hearings and the completion of the driver expense survey, TLC will get to work analyzing the information you all

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have provided and formally propose new rates early this summer. At which time, we will have another public hearing on a concrete proposed adjustment. All this is to say, this is not your final opportunity to weigh in on the rates of fare. This is the formal beginning of the process, and we are excited about working with all of you every step of the way in setting the rates.

With that said, let's dive right into this. As Tanya mentioned, please ensure your Zoom name matches the name you used when you signed up to speak. When I call your name, you are free to turn on your camera, unmute your mic and begin your testimony.

You will be given notice when you have 30 seconds remaining, and then another when your time has expired. At which time, you must conclude your testimony.

So with that, our first speaker

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will be Richard Lipsky (phonetic),
followed by Michelle Dottin.

MS. SCOTT: Richard Lipsky,
please unmute your microphone and
begin your testimony.

SPEAKER: Good morning, Cochair,
good morning, Commission. My name is
Richard Lipsky, I represent Big Apple
Taxi Management Company. And
delighted to be here today.

I think the major issue here is,
for us, we are a large management
company and a major issue is how to
get the cars back on the street. And
I think that's something the
Commission has been looking at as
well.

And one of the things we want to
do is to make sure that we can kind of
waive the accessibility issue for
temporary transition because the
availability of the accessible taxis
are not there, so that we can comply
with the -- the mandate of

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accessibility. Which we are welcomed to do.

But if the cars are not available and the supply chain is broken, we have 7,000 medallions in storage and we need to figure out collaboratively how to work together so that we can get those cars on the street.

I have larger testimony as well that, you know, I will submit on some other issues that are important in terms of the transition to collaboration between Uber and -- from taxis and Uber working together. So we'll talk about that --

TIMEKEEPER: Thirty seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: Yes. So we look forward to working with the new commissioner, Commissioner Do and working to get yellow taxis on the street and getting back to a full complement of those taxis serving the

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public.

Thank you very much. I will submit my testimony, and we'll go from there.

MR. WANTTAJA: Okay. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Next up, we will have Michelle Dottin, followed by Michael Simon.

SPEAKER: Hi. Good morning.

MR. WANTTAJA: Morning.

SPEAKER: I am Michelle Dottin, a driver and advocate for all drivers and delivery workers. I am part of the IDG. And really, today, I want to talk about leasing caps, some of which I believe have been unfair.

We've had licenses given to many new -- new organizations such as Revel, which were for electric cars, which took away the ability for individual drivers to be able to have their own plates.

This is a hardship on the driver. It should have -- these

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drivers should have been put into consideration first, rather than corporations. 50 plates could have been given to 50 drivers. We'd like you to consider taking those drivers who have had -- whose been in the system before the moratorium grandfathered in, to be able to get at least the electric plates, if not pushing them in to waive those drivers who want to do that.

But it's been highly unfair that these large companies are the ones who can fleece the drivers, take advantage of all of these procedures and make the drivers stay in that mode of, you know, paying day-to-day --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: So please, I'm asking you at this time to open up some plates for grandfathered-in drivers, as well as those electric plates that you took away, which was totally

1
2 unfair to those drivers. Please take
3 this into consideration. I implore
4 you. This is something that --
5 fairness should be always put in
6 place.

7 Thank you for your time.

8 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
9 your testimony.

10 Ours next speaker will be
11 Michael Simon followed by Jaime
12 Serrano (phonetic) who has requested a
13 Spanish interpreter.

14 Michael Simon, you may unmute
15 your microphone and begin your
16 testimony.

17 SPEAKER: I got it. Okay.

18 Can you hear me?

19 MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, we can hear
20 you.

21 SPEAKER: Okay. My name is
22 Michael Simon. And I'm a medallion
23 owner for almost 40 years. The
24 medallion owner driver and leasing
25 driver want expectations in their

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future, that they can support a family and be proud. Pride is definitely missing in this industry, and we have to bring it back.

I've come to realize there's a hierarchy that needs to be followed in this industry. The taxis must be the first choice for the riding public and the black car second.

The role of the black car is for passengers that want to pay a much higher price for a much more comfortable car. If we go back to Fiorello La Guardia, who created the medallion system, and he was considered one of America's best mayors of all times, even an airport was named after him, he was not a stupid guy. He was progressive. He created the medallion system after the Great Depression to provide means for owners and drivers to make a better living.

Yellow cabs scream New York

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City. The more cabs you put on the streets, the more New York you have and the world sees. New York and yellow cabs go together.

A significant cost to medallion owners is the vehicle retirement division. Uber drivers are allowed to keep their car as long as they want, but taxi owners cannot. And this is a significant added --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: Significant added cost for the medallion owner.

I'd like to propose that owners with only one driver be able to keep their cars for as long as it passes inspections.

I'd also like to mention something about roof lights, roof lights, which is an overlooked subject. They're not bright enough. Especially on taxis that have rooftop advertising. The advertisers really

1
2 don't care about how bright they are
3 because they only care about their
4 signs. There's a conflict of
5 interest --

6 TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

7 SPEAKER: So that's why I'm
8 asking for a proposed rule to make the
9 roof light brighter.

10 Thank you very much.

11 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
12 your testimony.

13 Our next speaker will be Jaime
14 Serrano, who has requested a Spanish
15 language interpreter, followed by
16 Bhaira Videsai.

17 MS. SCOTT: Jamie Serrano,
18 please unmute your microphone and
19 begin your testimony.

20 SPEAKER: Can you hear me now?
21 Good morning.

22 MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, we can hear
23 you.

24 SPEAKER: I'm here to testify
25 for the increase in the fare.

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I'm a medallion owner for the last 20 years, and I've noticed an increase in the prices for over the last 10 years. For example, car wash was \$8, now it's 16. Change of oil was 30, now it's between 55 and 60. And the prices have increased 70 to 80 percent. And of course, gasoline has been increased by quite a bit.

I think the \$3 a minute is good and 60 cents a minute -- I'm sorry. \$3 a mile is good and 60 cents a minute is good. The price now from \$42 to LaGuardia is going to be increased to \$50.40, with the increase, I think it's good.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Bhaira Videsai, followed by Vinal Valhorta (phonetic).

SPEAKER: Hi. Good morning. Thank you so much, members of the Commission, and congratulations to

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Chairman Do. We really look forward to working with you.

It has been 10 long years since the yellow cab meter rates have gone up. Ten of the most difficult, painful years that this industry has seen. From suicides to early deaths, so much tragedy in these last 10 years. But I also remember in 2012, when the last fare raise took place. The sense of hope that existed.

It had been eight years prior, you know, to -- eight -- it had been eight years before that raise had been enacted. People had already been waiting for so long. But once the 2012 raise came in, we saw the effect on driver income.

We saw it at least for the first year, and then Uber and Lyft were allowed in pretty much unregulated. And very soon, the raise to the bottom sank in for everybody. What we've

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seen is an attempt to really destroy full-time driving as a job.

When you fast forward to today, you are looking at gas prices that are 80 percent higher today than just from 2019. The cost of bread and milk has gone up, you know, the latest Consumer Price Index reports indicate that the cost of food, which is -- which is going up at a faster rate than it's ever been since 1980 --

TIMEKEEPER: Thirty seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: -- last 40 years, is only going to continue to go up.

But what we need from the TLC is not only immediate action for this present crisis, what we need is to reset the economics in this industry to protect full-time jobs. So that every single driver can take home after expenses, \$25 per hour. Nothing less than \$25 per hour.

Drivers bear expenses --

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TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

SPEAKER: They collectively serve a million people every single day. They work in dangerous conditions. They perform work that is essential to our City. Their labor needs to be respected, and that means nothing less than \$25 an hour after expenses for every single driver.

Thank you.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Vinal Valhorthra (phonetic), followed by Mohammed Islam.

Vinal Valhorthra, you may unmute your microphone and begin your testimony.

SPEAKER: Okay. Hello, sir. You hear me, sir?

MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, I can hear you.

SPEAKER: Good morning, all commissioners. To our godfathers,

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thank you so much. Great work for us.

My name is Vinal Valhorthra. So I -- I am -- members -- we agree that you raise 65 and meter rate is better. Please consider owner at JFK Airport, because most car have like wheelchairs, they're like tank gas. They don't put in gas. They're tank gas. Like going to JFK and LaGuardia. We spent too much gas.

So please reconsider like \$7 from JFK. And tax over one -- one hour and fifteen minutes, add another \$5 sub charge. Same like LaGuardia. And I -- long areas, please take -- these companies, companies and vendors. I am a -- they're cheating on us. Since they start paying like a few percent, \$250 to the State, I find out they're not paying us properly. Because I have a person reported me.

So in one of the -- they pay me less, \$140 paid for -- 8-dollar. So they have something -- no accurate

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2 system. Please, I am ready to assist
3 with you any -- on this. So this
4 very --

5 TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
6 remaining.

7 SPEAKER: All drivers on --
8 getting direct payment in their
9 accounts. So I don't know what other
10 drivers, I find out -- I am sure --
11 receiving to be made -- they don't
12 sending us in our accounts.

13 So again, please raise, it's
14 good for all. Thank you so much.
15 Thank you. God bless you.

16 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
17 your testimony.

18 Our next speaker will be
19 Mohammed Islam followed by Peter
20 Mazer.

21 SPEAKER: Hi. You hear me, sir?

22 MR. WANTTAJA: Yes. We can hear
23 you.

24 SPEAKER: Yeah, yeah. Good
25 morning, everyone. My name is

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Mohammed Islam. Driving more than two decades in yellow cab.

Raising the fare is long overdue. The last increase was 10 years ago, which you know, everybody knows about it. Companies like Uber and Lyft, will raise their fare if it is raining or snow, or evening or morning rush hour, while medallion driver cannot do that.

Yellow cab and green cab, black fare to go to JFK. Uber and Lyft can charge up to even 200-dollar in the evening rush hour or snow or rain.

Okay. And the -- is a little bit slow there. Down their fare, yellow cab and green cab meter fare. So people will chose Uber and Lyft over us. We cannot compete with them. We can't surcharge -- our insurance and all of the rules tied up -- yellow cabdriver and medallion owner.

Car cost and living cost, which is, as I mentioned, everything before

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cost, living cost, everything high.
All of our money goes to TLC or State
of fund. And TLC drivers like poorly.
We need to raise the fare to get that
leveled playing field with Uber and
Lyft.

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
remaining.

SPEAKER: Okay. You only gave
me two minutes. I cannot explain
whatever I have.

So please listen or go to
website, NYTWA, she has very good
point and you will learn how to help,
especially yellow and green
cabdrivers.

So please, try to help, and I
believe TLC will do this. Especially
our new chairman. Thanks for
listening again.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
your testimony. I'll just remind
everybody that, you know, I understand
the time is short. We do have a very

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lengthy list of speakers. But you are more than welcome to submit written testimony to TLC Rules at TLC dot NYC dot GOV.

As I promised, this is just the beginning of this. We will be accepting testimony well beyond these hearings. So please, if you do have more information you wish to provide us, do not hesitate to reach out.

With that said, we have -- our next speaker will be Peter Mazer followed by Airhen Tonsel (phonetic).

SPEAKER: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Peter Mazer and I'm general counsel to the Metropolitan Taxicab Board of Trade. This is a trade association that is seventy years old, representing the owners and operators of licensed medallion taxicabs.

As you've heard, fare increased -- taxicab fares have not been increased since 2012, while the

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cost of living continues to rise. At the same time, ridership has declined and average revenues in taxicabs has declined by half over the last 10 years.

A fare increase is long overdue. But it will not solve all of the industry's problems. That will require a comprehensive regulatory review of everything that the Commission does that affects drivers, owners, operators and passengers. We need to think creatively about making the best use of our cabs to complement other forms of mass transportation and provide alternatives to private car ownership.

When the City Charter was written in 1971, the industry was different. We relied primarily on a commission basis. So the analysis going into a fare increase petition was different. And on behalf of MTBOT, we plan to submit a fare

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increase petition, which will be comprehensive and will look not only at the economics of increasing revenue, but also looking at how we can be a part of the transportation infrastructure, and how we could, as an industry, promote better use of our taxicabs.

We promote the following items. We suggest in addition to a fare increase --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: -- the use of the extension of the 250 surcharge to all trips on the outer boroughs to incentivize passengers to use taxicabs and -- and incentivize our drivers to serve the outer boroughs.

We support a gasoline surcharge, which we believe should be indexed at a price of gasoline, and the surcharge should go up or down based on the current gasoline prices on a regular

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basis.

We support the use of the
increases in the JFK search --

TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

SPEAKER: -- and also the
LaGuardia rate. We are supplementing
our comments with written comments,
and as I stated earlier, a much more
comprehensive fare increase proposal
in the near future.

Thank you for your time.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Airhen
Tonsel, followed by Eugene Solomon.

I see Airhen Tonsel in here.
You are free to unmute your mic and
begin your testimony.

SPEAKER: Hello, can you hear
me?

MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, I can hear
you.

SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you
very much.

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You know, I'm not going to go into the fare hike and how much it should be. I think anybody in their right mind knows that we need a fare hike. But I'm going to hit a couple of different points.

One of them is -- is, app companies' ability to undercut yellow meter. The yellow meter integrity must be kept in tact. And -- you know, just passing the -- giving the fare raise is not going to be enough without passing a rule or a law that prevents from any segment of the taxi -- the for-hire vehicle industry for charging below the yellow meter. That is extremely important in my opinion. And that should be considered by -- by the TLC.

Secondly, gasoline surcharge, that's an immediate concern. It cannot wait three, four, five months for the fare hike to happen and then we get the gasoline surcharge or you

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can consider it. If you are going to consider giving us a gasoline surcharge to help us with the gasoline prices --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: And also, one more thing. For love of God, I don't know why DOVs, driver owned vehicles with single drivers have to pay double insurance. I have no idea where that came from, who regulates that and who enforces that. It's unfair. Especially this day and age when everybody is having hard time finding drivers. So are DOVs. And if somebody --

TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

SPEAKER: -- and buy their own vehicle, they should not have to pay double insurance. Please look into it. It's extremely important for them to survive. There's no reason for them to pay more than double the

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insurance of a single driver. Like an owner driver. Thank you very much.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Eugene Solomon, followed by Wayne Chin (phonetic).

Eugene, you may unmute your microphone and begin your testimony.

SPEAKER: Okay. Yes. I am Eugene Solomon. I have been a taxi driver since 1977. I was a medallion owner from 1984 until 1991. I'm the author of Confessions of a New York Taxi Driver, and the blog "Cabs are for Kissing."

You asked for suggestions from drivers in your e-mail about ways to retain experienced drivers and increase passengers' interest in taxis. So my -- hope this isn't off topic, but my comments have to do with -- my suggestion is to improve the driving -- the driver's condition

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while behind the wheel is to completely eliminate the taxi TV.

It's -- the driver has no control over the volume or even the -- whether he can turn it on or off. It's preset. The volume is preset by CMT. Even the taxi garage cannot change that.

Prerecorded loops of sound bites which begins when the meter is turned on and end when the meter is turned off, continuously going on over and over again. It's annoying and distracting to the driver. And I think it has no place in the environment of a taxi driver. It actually violates, if you think about it, the purpose of Vision Zero, which is to create a distraction free environment.

My suggestion is not to eliminate the taxi TV --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

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SPEAKER: -- but to eliminate the sound. I'd like to see it transition from sound into text messages and videos and pictures only. I think this will be applauded by all drivers and the passengers as well, who generally pay attention to it or hopefully turn it off.

Thank you for listening. That's my comment.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony today.

Our next speaker will be Wayne Chin.

SPEAKER: Hello. Hi. Good morning. Can you hear me? Hello? Hello?

MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, we can hear you.

SPEAKER: Yes. My name is Wayne Chin. I am a taxi owner. I'm also a member -- alliance. And I -- I support my union position proposal for the rate increase because we haven't

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had a raise for the last 10 years.

In the meantime, the living cost, the operating cost went up. So we need -- we need a raise for the fare. And because right now we have to work a lot of hours just to survive. Okay. And so -- I'm working six days a week -- six days a week, 14-hour day just to survive.

So we need a raise so we can support our family, we can send our kid to college. You know, also -- you know, we drive long hour on a street. It take a toll on my body. You know, our body, you know, sitting there all day, your legs, your body, your back tired. You know, so we need to work less hour, you know. So if the rate increases, we can work less hour.

Right now, I do like 70, 80 hour a week. That's too much for us. We have to work like 60 hours, 65 hour. You know -- you know, just last month, I -- I work in JD Lot. I had one

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2 driver taken by ambulance because he
3 having medical emergency --

4 TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
5 remaining.

6 SPEAKER: He had a medical
7 emergency. The driver had to work
8 long hour just to survive. We need a
9 raise for all driver across the
10 industry to survive. So -- so we can
11 provide our family, we can send our
12 kid to college.

13 Thank you so much for your time.
14 Thank you so much. Bye-bye.

15 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
16 your testimony.

17 Our next speaker will be Zubin
18 Soleimany, followed by Richard Chow
19 (phonetic).

20 SPEAKER: Hello. Good morning.
21 Good morning. This is Zubin
22 Soleimany, I'm a staff attorney at the
23 New York Taxi Workers' Alliance. I
24 would like to focus my comments today
25 on the use of upfront pricing in the

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e-hail market, where taxi passengers receive a flat fare and drivers receive a flat rate of compensation.

There are currently no regulations that govern what the drivers are paid when there are flat rate E-hail trips. As we are looking at a situation in where we are going to analyze the rates of fare, we have to understand that there has to be regulation here where there's a growing E-hail market and any change to the rates of taxi fares won't actually impact what drivers earn on these trips.

Prior to the pilot program for E-hails, drivers were required to be paid the full rate of the fare. Like they would any other credit card trip. Unfortunately, what we've been seeing is the drivers are often earning less and often significantly less than they -- than what they would have with the metered fare.

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So the main proposal we have here is that under no circumstance on an E-hail trip should a driver receive anything less than what the metered fare would be for that trip.

To be fair, drivers on these trips should be entitled to additional compensation for the time in transit from the dispatch point to the pick-up point, which is time where they are forgoing any other street hail and would even pass up passengers who could begin a trip earlier. That's a concept that's codified in the rules for app-base, high volume drivers in the utilization rates that aims to compensate --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: -- would be working.

I would note that there was a pilot program established in May of 2018, commenced in June of 2018, which was supposed to produce four reports

1
2 that were supposed to, among other
3 things, analyze what drivers -- the
4 impact on drivers earning it. Only
5 one report was produced and we have
6 not seen the rest. The program was
7 supposed to expire after 24 months, or
8 rules were supposed to be
9 promulgated --

10 TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

11 SPEAKER: It seems that neither
12 of those things have happened when
13 they were supposed to. We would be
14 very interested to know what happened
15 to these reports, what data TLC does
16 have about driver earning. The
17 preliminary data showed that flex
18 fares were less than metered fares
19 without even going into how much of
20 that the driver had kept.

21 So we'd ask for that data -- for
22 that research to be completed, that
23 data be shared and to -- to have a
24 regulation in the future that allows
25 for a fare amount of driver pay

1
2 absolutely no less than the metered
3 rate.

4 Thank you very much.

5 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
6 your testimony.

7 Our next speaker will be Richard
8 Chow, followed by Vignesh Trespa
9 (phonetic).

10 SPEAKER: Hello. Can you hear
11 me?

12 MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, we can hear
13 you.

14 SPEAKER: Hi. Good morning. My
15 name is Richard Chow. I'm a member of
16 the New York Taxi Workers' Alliance.
17 I'm a yellow owner driver. The
18 inflation is too high across the
19 country, cost of living, cost of
20 driving is very, very expensive.
21 Taxi -- raise for taxi fare, no raise
22 for 10 year. After this rate, next
23 five years, okay. Not 10 year. 10
24 year is too long.

25 Last two week ago, New York Taxi

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Work Alliance meeting, all the driver agreed the taxi meter fare of 25 percent high, JFK 70-dollar, Newark Airport, LaGuardia Airport, fare plus surcharge and to the City. And plus the 75-cent gallon for the -- 75 cent gallon for the gas surcharge.

I strongly support NY -- the New York Taxi Work Alliance, raise for all the drivers immediately, please. Most of the time, I see City not busy. I drove my empty cab, drove to JFK, hit the traffic waiting for the passenger and the law come back to the city, cost me gas, 11-dollar. I paid Verazano Bridge every day, \$13, 10 cents. Drive 37 mile to the JFK every day. My household -- late payment, the credit cards are more than \$8,000 --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: I'm raising two kids to the college. My late brother, my

1
2 sister-in-law passed away the same
3 year. My -- but the new cars cost
4 45,000 to 50,000. The car dealer are
5 charging too much, very expensive. I
6 cannot afford it.

7 We need more vehicle inspection
8 automatically as long as pass the
9 inspection. We need the driver rate
10 that --

11 TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

12 SPEAKER: We need the raise
13 immediately.

14 Thank you for listening. Thank
15 you.

16 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
17 your testimony.

18 Our next speaker will be Vignesh
19 Trespa, followed by Edward Vaccio
20 (phonetic).

21 SPEAKER: Hello, can you hear
22 me, please?

23 MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, we can hear
24 you.

25 SPEAKER: Yeah. I'm Vignesh

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Trespa. I'm renting a 2015 Solo Van (phonetic) for 600-dollar per week.

I'm doing my business from July, this 2016 Solo Van is not eligible for Uber Black and SUV. So I lose my one and only job. And working for more than four years now, I want to buy my own car. But due to the cab on the plate, I cannot buy my own car.

So I'm really in confusion, like what I do is -- is -- you know -- so I lose my job. So TLC, decision maker, please help us have the driver like us to get their own plate and own car.

Thank you.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Edward Vaccio, followed by Robert Fadiga (phonetic).

Edward Vaccio, you can unmute your microphone and begin your testimony.

Edward, you may begin your

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testimony.

SPEAKER: Hello, can you hear me?

MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, we can hear you.

SPEAKER: Okay. I'm a green, wheelchair accessible vehicle owner and driver. Not enough people are talking about the problem with the Uber and the Lyft and all that ride share.

They have so many cars on the road. I'm forced to do Uber rides because there's -- so few people are taking the taxis. Whether it be E-hail. We can't compete when we are outnumbered, probably like -- there might be 100,000 people driving with Uber and -- you know, like that's one tenth of that yellow cabs left on the road.

So nobody is going to want to drive a yellow or green cab because you can't even pay the expenses. You

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can't make any money. You are not getting the fares. People are going to take the Ubers because they're going to get a car much quicker because there's outnumbered.

Now, Uber recently, back in December, they cut my pay out from 65 cents per minute to 50 cents a minute. So they took \$9 an hour away from me, the highest inflation --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: The -- the -- sometimes I'm driving around two hours waiting for an Uber call with no fares. And I think they lowered my fare because they used to have to pay -- I don't know if it was called utilization, where you had to pay for the driver's time out there. They did away with that. They pay me bare, bare minimum. And I'm not getting the rides. So unless that is fixed --

TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

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SPEAKER: Then Uber is forced to at least pay the driver where they can make minimum wage. Everything else doesn't mean anything. You can raise the yellow and green taxis all you want. But you are not going to get the rides because people aren't going to call them because they're outnumbered, you know, 10, 20 to one by -- and Uber seems to be unlimited. I think they're already asking people to join Uber where I thought there was a limit on it.

So it's just -- Uber is getting away with murder and totally destroying the whole yellow and -- they gave me a ride -- Uber gave me a ride to the airport from Brooklyn. Uber charged the passenger \$87. They paid me 42. Okay. I called Uber. I said --

MR. WANTTAJA: I'm sorry, your time is expired. We have to move on.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much

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and the problem is that Uber is --
is --

MR. WANTTAJA: All right. Well,
thank you for your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Robert
Fadiga, followed by Allison Langley.

SPEAKER: Hello. My name is
Robert Fadiga. I'm a medallion owner
and been driving on the streets of New
York since 1994. It's 28 years.
That's like a million miles. And I'd
have to say, it's a pretty sad story
right now with this situation and cost
between gas and insurance. Even
grocery shopping.

I'm a member of the New York
Taxi Workers Alliance, and they're
really looking out for the owners and
drivers in this city. So I really
support what's going on as far as what
they're advising.

We really need a fare increase.
10 years is a really long time and we
need a gas surcharge. We need

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2 something that's there so that we
3 don't have to wait every time, like to
4 decide on gas surcharge. Like when
5 the gas gets to a certain price, it
6 should just automatically be
7 implemented.

8 And then the lease cap to
9 protect us drivers for, you know, any
10 gouging pricing. Inflation is just
11 incredible between, you know, the time
12 when the fare went up last time --

13 TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
14 remaining.

15 SPEAKER: It's incredible. It's
16 more than 30 percent. I really hope
17 that the Taxi Limousine Commission
18 comes to a good number for our future.
19 And even the cost of a new vehicle to
20 put into service has increased
21 tremendously.

22 Thank you for your time and
23 thank you New York Taxi Workers'
24 Alliance.

25 Have a great day.

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MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Ally
Langley, followed by Mohamadou Aliyou
(phonetic).

SPEAKER: Good morning. My name
is Ally Langley. I'm staff attorney
at the New York Taxi Workers'
Alliance.

On behalf of our yellow and
green cab members, I'm here to ask not
only for a raise to the meter, but for
comprehensive regulatory action to
protect driver income from rising
expenses.

As my colleagues at NYTWA, as
well as our many members who have and
will testify today will attest to, the
need for a raise is urgent. Drivers
are living through a crisis of
poverty, struggling to quite literally
even put food on the table for their
families.

But while raising the meter is

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an essential and necessary first step to combat this poverty, it's not the only part of the solution. Instead, it must be part of our comprehensive rules package that increases driver pay, while limiting driver expenses.

NYTWA has proposed such a comprehensive package in our written submissions, and today I'll highlight just a few of those proposals.

First, drivers need to see not only a raise to the meter now, 10 years after its last increase, but also annual increases to account for inflation. The TLC has already acknowledged the importance of use annual increases for inflation while creating the rules for app driver pay. Yellow and green cab drivers need and deserve the same certainty that their pay will, at minimum, keep pace with rising expenses.

Second, in addition to rule changes that lead to an immediate

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increase in driver pay, the TLC must also pass rules that help drivers manage costs.

For example, the lease caps need to be revised in order to reflect the changing realities of the industry.

When the lease --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: -- 2012, it was standard for drivers to double shift. That is one driver worked the day shift and another the night. As a result of the changes brought by Uber and Lyft and the decrease in passengers for yellow cabs, now a single driver will lease a cab for 24 hours. And each car brings a much less income. So the lease caps must be reduced to reflect this reality.

Similarly, the rules must be changed to account for increases in the purchasing of new vehicles and there must be an automatic extension

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of retirement dates for all cabs that pass inspections.

TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

SPEAKER: Thank you for your time today. We look forward to working with the TLC to implement these changes.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Mohamadou Aliyu, followed by Austin Chowdhry (phonetic).

SPEAKER: Hi. Good morning. My name is Mohamdou Aliyu. I'm a father of four; a three-year-old, five-years-old, seven-years-old and a 24-year-old who cannot even take care of himself. I have to look after him every time.

I've been driving a cab since 2001, and I'm the proud member of the New York Taxi Workers' Alliance.

Last 10 years, a war has been waged on me and my family through the

1
2 EL company. My life has been damaged.
3 My dream have been turned to a
4 nightmare. I mean, my life has been
5 ruined last 10 years. And I welcome
6 the new chairman. I wish him luck. I
7 wish him good luck. This is the time
8 to fix this. To make something work
9 better.

10 And I'm fully supporting New
11 York Taxi Workers' Alliance old
12 proposal, from level one to level 24.
13 Anything less than that won't be
14 acceptable. Because we are human
15 being, we are hard-working people.
16 And a system not government issued
17 allowed a system to make hard-working
18 people -- it's not acceptable, it's
19 not good, it's not good for the
20 society. Therefore, this is the
21 opportunity --

22 TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
23 remaining.

24 SPEAKER: -- to -- the system to
25 raise this fare to make our lives

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better and nobody should touch our meter. Our meter should not be touched by any EL.

Anything less than the meter will not be acceptable. We will be sleeping on the street until we adjust this. Because we went through so much. We went through so much damage. 10 years is too much. Thank God I'm still alive. This is the time --

TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

SPEAKER: This is the time to get it done so I can go back with my life and my -- my children are not going to be poor like me. My children -- because I'm a hard-working guy, I drive, I'm proud member of New York Taxi Workers' Alliance. And I want you guys to fully implement all the 24 proposal from New York Taxi Worker Alliance.

Thank you very much.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony.

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Our next speaker will be Osman Chowdhry, followed Ibrahim Dialou (phonetic).

SPEAKER: Hello. Good morning. Hear me?

MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, we can hear you.

SPEAKER: My name is Osman Chowdhry. I'm on behalf of United Taxi Drivers Association NYC. I've been driving last 25 years.

But first of all, when the fare increased, I need to know, verify the driver guarantee income. When I drive the nighttime, I get the fare for out of city. My fare is not getting -- I don't get my fare. That's why I need the flat fare rate. Guaranteed by fare, because every sector like subway, bus, plane, airline, train, everywhere you got to buy fare, got to buy the ticket and when it come to the yellow taxi, they go someplace, they don't get fare. That's why lose a lot

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of money.

Another thing that came out, JFK, LaGuardia flat fare is fine. The 50 percent fare local get the JFK like -- like 10-dollar fare, but -- fare, we have to make the universal 40-dollar local fare because otherwise, the -- the solution -- the only city cab, the flat fare going to benefit 50 percent fare -- we need to fix things.

And also if someone, when driving, if someone throw up vomiting inside of cab, that night we don't make money because we finish our shift. You need to make -- follow the Uber rule. Anybody making this kind of thing, they have to -- all -- like hundred 50-dollar. So driver have a guarantee that that type is going to do it, we're not making money.

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: Also -- submit my

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written testimony, as soon as possible. I have a lot of things. Two minutes is not enough.

Thank you very much for opportunity.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony. If you have additional comments, feel free to submit those to TLC rules at TLC dot NYC dot GOV.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I'll do that.

MR. WANTTAJA: All right. Thank you.

Our next speaker will be Ibrahim Diallo, followed by Raul Rivera.

SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Ibrahim. I'm a staff attorney at the New York Taxi Workers' Alliance. Thank you for hosting this hearing.

Previous speakers have talked about expenses, and we know those need to be looked at. We know that drivers support families. Our data shows that

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about 90 percent of drivers -- for about 90 percent of drivers, the income they make from driving is the main household income. And we heard from Richard earlier and Wayne and Mamadaliou, about -- that they're raising families with this income, they're paying rent, they're paying mortgage. So it's important that the income that they make is high enough to be able to do that when they're working eight, 12 hours a day.

I want to focus my comments on the need for more robust regulatory framework on the E-hail side. I believe that without properly regulating E-hail, this will become the back door for driver exploitation.

As you know, E-hail is the new boundaries that app companies are going to push. And it is important, as a regulatory agency, that the TLC is prepared to adequately respond and put in place well-informed policies

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that center drivers who are the most impacted by these changes.

I don't think there's another regulatory agency in the country that is better equipped with data and legal authority to seriously protect the driver earnings in the E-hail space. The TLC knows exactly how much drivers earn through this pilot program --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: And we know what happened last time app companies were able to redefine the boundaries within the TLC's regulatory framework, on the taxi and for-hire industry. We are dealing with the consequences to this day. Including the raise to the bottom. We cannot forget the lessons that we learned from that era.

We know that app companies will exploit every loophole that exists, and it is important that the TLC does a comprehensive review and make sure

1
2 that driver earnings are protected.

3 E-hail cannot be the back door --

4 TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

5 SPEAKER: -- exploiting drivers.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
8 your testimony.

9 Our next speaker will be Raul
10 Rivera, followed by Valcar Singh.

11 SPEAKER: Good morning. My name
12 is Raul Rivera. I'm a New York
13 native. I'm a TLC driver and a TLC
14 driver advocate. I'm here by City
15 Hall, and we want to thank the
16 Commission for the hearings.

17 And one of the -- I want to
18 express myself. One of the problems
19 we have here in the City, there's a
20 lot of division, there's a lot of
21 blaming, pointing fingers. We have
22 many groups that are blaming Uber and
23 Lyft. And the real problem is, the
24 taxi -- the TLC, the Taxi and
25 Limousine Commission.

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I founded a group called NYC Drivers Unite. It's the only group in the City with a petition to reform the Taxi Limousine Commission. We have elected officials that signed on, including Mayor Eric Adams. We just had a meeting with him March 5, and we sent him close to 30 points and three bills for the benefit of the driver.

Also I want to say that we -- drivers in the City are extremely lucky. We just dodged a bullet. Mr. Ryan Wanttaja was not chosen as the new TLC Chair, and we are thankful for that. It's not a personal attack. But we need some real change, and we can't keep blaming Uber and Lyft. We got to reform that Taxi Limousine Commission.

Mr. Adams signed that petition. We wanted to stand by his name. We asked that he give us a press conference, or at least give us a statement. We wanted to stand by his

1
2 name. That's what we ask.

3 TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
4 remaining.

5 SPEAKER: Thank you.

6 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
7 your testimony.

8 Our next speaker will be Valcar
9 Singh, followed by Emdee Shaik
10 (phonetic).

11 SPEAKER: Testing. You talk --
12 you heard me, sir?

13 MR. WANTTAJA: Yeah. We can
14 hear you. There's a fair amount of
15 echo on there, though.

16 SPEAKER: My name is Valcar
17 Singh. I'm driving like 32 years, and
18 I am the Taxi Worker Alliance member,
19 long time. So we need now fare meter
20 raised. And 10-year no had meter
21 raise, so everything got expensive.
22 Insurance and -- and car pay, taxi
23 pay, car cleaning, and gas is double
24 now. Even you buy the food now, it's
25 very expensive.

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And I'm helping my brother.
I'm -- my brother, my mother, my
father and my kid. So very expensive
to buy stuff. So I request Mr. New
Mayor and New Commissioner, you can do
it now, this time. Last
administration didn't raise anything.
Now 10 year and you can do now.

Inflation is very high, even
President Biden say inflation high.
So I don't have to tell you. You know
everything. So please give the meter
fare raise for yellow cab. And Uber
charging so much money, even TLC
knows, they're not doing any control.
They charge like 150, \$200 for JFK and
we're charging only \$52. So now
please, time. Otherwise, it's going
to be a lot of taxi driver getting
like -- they get bankruptcy. A lot
of --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
remaining.

SPEAKER: Guy no driving because

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the gas. So please now raise the meter fare, and our Taxi Worker Alliance, we are agreeing with them.

So time to go now is -- give us good opportunity and we drive like a 12-hour day. So then we can drive -- live less and we can raise our family. You know, give us, please.

Thank you very much.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony.

Our next speaker will be Emdee -- followed by --

(Audio interruption.)

MR. WANTTAJA: I'll say it one more time. Our next speaker will be Emdee Shaik, followed by Daoud Dian (phonetic).

I am seeing a Masoud Allam (phonetic) in here. Maybe we'll go with Masoud Allam next then.

SPEAKER: Hello.

MR. WANTTAJA: Hi, yes.

SPEAKER: Hi. Can you hear me?

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MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, we can hear you.

SPEAKER: Yes, sir. Good afternoon, guys. My name is Masoud Allum, and I have been driving taxi, yellow taxi from 2007. And we really need a raise because the expenses and everything just went too high. The example that the car cash, I used to do it before the pandemic, was I think \$12. Now it's high to \$24. And like all those expenses now is twice amount whatever we used to pay before the pandemic.

And the money we make, it doesn't cover all those expenses. And the gas prices, out of control. I drive one of the six cylinder vehicle and every day I need like 60-dollar gas. And to make \$60, I need to bring one JFK and take me like two hours when we push the traffic to JFK Airport like in rush hour.

And so I will say like

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2 Commission that we actually really
3 need a raise and that the Commission
4 can do something --

5 TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
6 remaining.

7 SPEAKER: -- smart. So we
8 cannot have the competition with Uber
9 and then suffer and -- and we can
10 survive that way so that the
11 Commission can find out. And thank
12 you. Thank you so much. Thank you
13 for everything. Thank you, sir.

14 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
15 your testimony.

16 Our next speaker will be Souren
17 Manakatoua (phonetic), followed by
18 Manginder Singh (phonetic).

19 SPEAKER: Hello, everyone. My
20 name is Souren Manakatoua. I'm member
21 of New York Taxi Workers' Alliance. I
22 own and drive -- I own and drive a
23 medallion taxi since 1989. I'm
24 60 years old and have asthma and
25 prostate complications for last

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five years due to driving cab for long hours.

I'm requesting that NYC and New York State should give us a retirement income because we ran the city like every other City employees, including but not limited to fire, police, sanitation and MTA. Whom we pay so much money to run through our nose.

Our jobs are the most hazardous and dangerous. I didn't get much benefits from loan forgiveness because my loan was only 200,000. I appreciate the counselors calling me every other month, but it's not helping me pay my loan amount plus other expenses because I'm not driving anymore.

I'm at the mercy of brokers and insurance companies who keep exploiting me and us. There's a monopoly for medallion insurance. It cost over \$10,000 a year to ensure when owners cannot drive.

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When I went to sell my medallion, it was one million dollars. They said we will call you --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: But they never called me. But I heard they were selling their medallions for one million. So I hope you understand what I'm talking about. That's why there should be owners at the sole center, drivers at the sole center, should have owners to get compensated when they're old 55 age, and help them get cheaper insurance.

Any further inquiries or questions, you can reach me in the e-mail or call the union. We ran the city like no one else but still want the credit we deserve.

Thank you all for your time and patience.

TIMEKEEPER: Time has expired.

SPEAKER: May God bless us all.

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Thank you so much. Have a nice day.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
your testimony.

Our next speaker is Vanginder
Singh, followed by Emdee Matalab
(phonetic).

SPEAKER: Good morning,
everyone. My name is Vanginder Singh.
Hello?

MR. WANTTAJA: Hi, yes. We can
hear you.

SPEAKER: Good morning. My name
is Vanginder Singh, and I'm supporting
the all -- to the Taxi Worker Alliance
and I add my comment, the toll at the
Verazano Bridge is by two way now. So
when we go to the Staten Island, the
customer pay us the way back, plus the
toll to go to Bronx. Also be --
should be to the -- paid to the round
trip toll to the driver to make his
income more.

Because sometimes JFK is busy,
and they like to come JFK and the

1
2 amount of taxi at JFK is very high
3 right now. And plus we need the
4 immediate raise because we are paying
5 like 30 to 40 percent everything high,
6 than compared to the 2012. Right now,
7 I'm are working 90-hour week to make
8 sure I make my living.

9 So thank you for your
10 supporting. Especially for the Taxi
11 and Limousine Commission, not to give
12 us 10-year rate. You know. And make
13 us almost bankrupt. So can you make
14 the rule. Cannot be happen again.
15 And every year revise the rates to the
16 inflation.

17 TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
18 remaining.

19 SPEAKER: So thank you to all
20 participating and that's all. Thank
21 you very much.

22 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
23 your testimony.

24 Our next speaker will be Emdee
25 Islam, followed by Daoum Dian

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(phonetic).

Emdee Islam, you may unmute your microphone and begin your testimony.

(No response.)

MR. WANTTAJA: One more call for Emdee Islam, you may unmute your microphone and begin your testimony.

(No response.)

MR. WANTTAJA: Okay. We'll move onto our next speaker, and Islam, if you are there, our next speaker will be Daoud Dian, followed by Emdee Moutalab.

SPEAKER: Hey, how are you doing. Thank you for the time. The thing I wanted to mention was more from an investor perspective and related to making sure the medallion value doesn't decline too much.

And so for example, two topics on this, I'll keep it short, is one relates to the lease cap. So for example, the NYTWA just said that the lease cap should be lowered because

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they correctly said that instead of two shift drivers, there's one shift drivers. But if you reduce the lease caps, you are going to crush medallion values. And you know, we can go into the details later.

So some suggestions, while good, actually have a negative impact on the medallion value. And given the City just gave 170,000 debt guarantee, that also puts the City guarantee at risk.

The other thing I wanted to mention was about this call for one driver, one plate. While I understand the logic behind it, obviously, if somebody's been driving a TLC plated car for 10 years, they should have the opportunity to have their own plate.

In terms of the yellow cab industry, and I'll talk about it more tomorrow in more lengthy testimony or more detailed testimony, is that if you open the FHV license pause, the medallion value is going to be

1
2 crushed. So the only thing I wanted
3 to highlight, obviously in two minutes
4 it's hard to go over all of this, is
5 some of the --

6 TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds
7 remaining.

8 SPEAKER: While some of the
9 suggestions are well intentioned, it
10 can have very negative impacts on the
11 medallion value. And if the City just
12 guaranteed medallion debt for
13 perspective medallion investors, we
14 need to see very clear guidance on
15 kind of the path forward for vehicle
16 caps and whatnot.

17 Anyways, thank you very much for
18 your attention. Appreciate it.

19 MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 And we are going to try Emdee
22 Islam one more time here.

23 SPEAKER: Hello?

24 MR. WANTTAJA: Hello.

25 SPEAKER: Can you hear me?

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MR. WANTTAJA: Yes. We can hear you. You can begin your testimony.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much for the opportunity to explain my opinion.

Actually, I work for Uber, Lyft and Carb (phonetic). So the driver -- I need to know, I complete the fare, Uber take about -- tax and the end of the year they don't provide us that tax information and -- driver, I should know before accepting a fare, where I go, how much I'm going to make, how long it take. Why Uber and Lyft, they don't provide this information.

And also, I got another concern about -- now Uber going to charge the customer look like 200, they provide us only 40-dollar or 50-dollar and there is no rules and regulations. They charge and take more look like 45 person to 78 person money from -- we -- rates, they don't provide us any

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type of compensation or anything. And I got another concern.

I drive also Carb. What they're doing, they also take commission from me and that's --

TIMEKEEPER: 30 seconds remaining.

SPEAKER: And I think -- the rental company, they're -- I think they need to also bring us rules and regulation for renting a car because -- make renting high any time. There is no rules and regulation. And driver are suffering any time they give you high. So this is my concern.

Thank you very much.

MR. WANTTAJA: Thank you for your testimony.

And I am looking at the list, and it appears that was the last speaker for today's hearing. Thank you, everybody, so much for your testimony. Once again, I would just encourage everybody watching,

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listening and who has participated, to please fill out the driver expense survey that we will be sending out today. That will be incredibly useful to us as we set the taxi meter rate of fare, in addition to all the great testimony you provided today.

And again, tomorrow, we've got our hearing on FHV driver pay. So if you have thoughts on what we should set the FHV driver rates of pay, please participate in that hearing tomorrow.

Thank you to our Commissioners for joining us today, and thank you all for participating.

(TIME NOTED: 11:22 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)

:SS

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK)

I, Elbia Baires, a Notary Public within
and for the State of New York, do hereby certify:

I reported the proceedings in the
within-entitled matter, and that the within
transcript is a true record of such proceedings to
the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am not related
to any of the parties to this action by blood or
marriage; and that I am in no way interested in
the outcome of this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set
my hand this 30th day of May, 2022.


Elbia Merino (Baires)

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