In Re Commission Meeting NYC - Taxi & Limousine Commission October 6, 2021

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                     NEW YORK CITY
              TAXI & LIMOUSINE COMMISSION
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                    COMMISSION MEETING
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 8
                               October 6, 2021
                               10:05 a.m.
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     B E F O R E:
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     ALOYSEE HEREDIA JARMOSZUK, Chair
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     RYAN WANTTAJA, Acting General Counsel
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     Board of Commissioners:
     JACQUES JIHA, Commissioner
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     THOMAS SORRENTINO, Commissioner
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      STEVEN KEST, Commissioner
     LAUVIENSKA POLANCO, Commissioner
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     KENNETH MITCHELL, Commissioner.
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     James Tetta
     Court Reporter
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CHAIR JARMOSZUK: Good morning,
everyone. I'd like to welcome you all.
Today is Wednesday, October 6, 2021. We
are convening online for a public
meeting of the New York City Taxi and
Limousine Commission. It is 10:05 a.m.
I am Aloysee Jarmosuk, commissioner and
chair of the TLC.

We are joined this morning by the TLC board of commissioners, Jacques Jiha, Steven Kest, Kenneth Mitchell, Lauvienska Polanco, and Thomas Sorrentino.

Before we get into the crux of this public meeting, we want to provide a quick report on a couple of things relative to the TLC. We would like to highlight additional opportunities for wheelchair accessible taxi drivers. As more New Yorkers travel and move around the city, the number of trip requests for accessible dispatch are rising. There is no need to sign up. If you are a TLC license wheelchair accessible taxi

driver, simply accept the accessible dispatch trip offer on your driver information monitor. You will receive additional payment from about \$15 to \$35, depending on how far you to have travel to a pickup point on top of the metered fare.

To maximize earnings, please make sure that you sign up for the Taxi Improvement Fund, which was created to provide financial support to taxi drivers and medallion owners who want to provide wheelchair accessible service, and enrollment can be done directly on the TLC website. We'd like to thank all of our wheelchair accessible taxi drivers for helping to make New York City more accessible for everyone who needs.

I want to also quickly mention our renewal course. All TLC licensees who renewed their TLC driver licenses after January 2022 will take part in TLC's new continuing education course to support

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their work as professional drivers. The course was developed with input from over 4,000 TLC licensees who took part in an education survey that was issued this year to the entire industry as well as some of our industry partners, and we also did hear directly from TLC licensees that they want to learn how to provide better service to their customers, safe driving practices, and to learn how to enhance their earnings.

The new TLC driver renewal course will include those topics, plus how to use TLC online services, such as LARS and TLC UP, and hands-on wheelchair accessible vehicle training to help licensees serve all of their customers.

As a reminder, fees for courses are set by the authorized providers and the TLC does not keep any portion of those fees, so these renewal courses are not a source of revenue generation for the However, yesterday we received feedback from some licensees about the

2 cost associated with the renewal course

on top of other renewal fees which we are looking into, as we obviously are

5 not looking to burden licensees

financially.

Nonetheless, we are excited that seven TLC license driver education centers will offer the new renewal courses in multiple languages, in locations throughout the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. We look forward to a formal launch of that.

Now, onto the Medallion Relief
Program. I want to say a few words
before we move into our formal process
for this meeting, and I've been saying
some of this messaging to industry
people individually, and now I'd like to
do the same with everyone who is
participating in this meeting.

It is critical that we all get centered on the topics of the owner/driver resource center and the Taxi Medallion Owner Driver Relief Fund

Program, which we are calling the MRP.
As you all know, the Driver Resource
Center was legislated in 2019 and
officially opened in May of 2020. The
purpose of the Driver Resource Center
was and continues to be a resource for
owners and drivers to be given
resources, legal and financial advice
for the purpose of debt management,
including refinancing and restructures.
Debt restructuring is critical for
financial survival for individual
medallion owners/drivers in economic
distress.

Over a seven-month process between
May and December of 2020, we learned
that medallion owners with means for a
down payment for refinancing were able
to achieve better financial standing.
We also learned that many medallion
owners were unable to afford the down
payment needed to refinance or
restructure, and between January of 2020
-- 2021 and March of 2021, the city

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developed an appropriate response, and the \$65,000,000 relief program was announced in early March. The MRP was developed over a period of time in consultation with the New York City for-hire transportation industry with medallion owners and drivers with advocates, attorneys, financial experts, and economists from within the city and outside of the city. The MRP is for individual medallion owner/drivers only, and provides them necessary tools for a better financial situation than the one they are currently in, without negatively affecting their businesses to provide transportation to the public.

Settling for more favorable terms in their loan repayment plan will allow medallion owner/drivers to move away from the payments that are currently burdening them. With improved repayment terms and marketing conditions, owner/drivers should be able to stay afloat business-wise.

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And -- and so, just to be very clear, so that we're all on the same page, the MRP has been in progress since March 9th of 2021, and between the announcement period of the program and today, we have been working through our procurement process, which is a legal process that the city has to abide by in order to launch programs of this kind, and that procurement process is nearly complete.

12 Through the city's renewable grant 13 14 program, the distribution of funds was 15 approved to begin to be disbursed ahead 16 of the full completion of the 17 procurement process, and -- and the 18 first money in this program began to 19 move the week of September 13th. 20 think we can all agree that if there are 21 opportunities, and these are legal 22 opportunities, to provide assistance on 23 a more immediate basis, that there was 24 absolutely no reason to make anyone wait

longer than they need to for the

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financial relief that we have all been jointly advocating to commence.

I also want to share that the city has engaged industry and advocates extensively during my tenure here at the TLC, and many proposals were given full consideration, including the one from the Taxi Workers Alliance when it was presented to us in 2020, and while the city did not fully adopt that entire proposal, the MRP includes some elements and ideas that were put forth in alternative proposals, and -- and I think that we can all understand that once the city made its announcement that the \$65,000,000 fund would be the response to -- to the need for financial relief, that that was the end of the consideration period for alternative proposals.

However, it is critically important to note that the city's program does not include the implementation of alternative or additional plans that can

1 be run in parallel or that can 2 3 supplement existing supports. 4 Medallion Relief Program is in full 5 motion. That is completely legal, and the TLC continues to offer everyone in 6 7 the taxi industry, including advocates and owner/drivers, an opportunity for 8 9 all of us to work together in the interest of our owner/drivers who are in 10 11 desperate need of financial relief. And 12 we strongly encourage taxi licensees struggling with medallion-related debt 13 14 to reach out to the TLC owner/driver 15 resource center to schedule an 16 appointment. You can do so online at 17 the TLC website, or you can email us at 18 -- at a variety of email addresses 19 including TLCexternalaffairs@TLCNYC.gov. 20 We also have an MRP email address that 21 we can put -- that is on our website. 22 I'd like to also just share that, to 23 date, the MRP has completed and approved 24 a fair amount of -- of deals. Most --25 most recently we announced the first 57.

1 We are up to 70 today, and we will have 2 3 more details on that -- on those, but I'd like to share a little bit about the 4 5 57 that have gone through and been approved, and that group will receive 6 7 about 10.4 million in debt forgiveness, 8 and includes a diverse body of drivers 9 and lenders. The original debt for 10 those 57 are vast. They range 11 everywhere from \$22,000 to \$744,000, and -- and more specifically, there are 12 about 19 owners who had debt of \$208,000 13 14 or less, there were about 21 owners that 15 had debt between \$209,000 and \$500,000, and 17 owners who had debt between 16 17 \$500,000 and \$744,000. Their debt 18 forgiveness ranged from 10 percent to 63 19 percent respectively, and so this is an 20 important thing to highlight, because it demonstrates how individual each 21 22 person's circumstances are, and we have 23 created a program that allows for 24 maximum flexibility on an individual 25 basis.

I'd like to also share that the way 2 3 that the settlement and restructuring 4 will work depends on the situation of 5 the owner, so of that group of people, we had about 11 that were able to settle 6 7 and will owe no money now. We had eight -- we had eight who will have monthly 8 9 payments of less than \$615 a month under the new restructuring, and 37 of the 10 remaining group will have payments of 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

need, that lowers their payment on a monthly basis to \$800 or less. And -- and -- so that is important for everybody to hear.

This data not only demonstrates an enormous leap forward in actually providing actual help for medallion owners in need, but it is proof that the MRP in such a way is working and will provide substantial financial relief for medallion owners that choose to participate.

Again, I'd like to -- to say that it is time for all of us to come together to ensure that all available resources reach each medallion owner/driver in need, as soon as possible, this year, not 30 days from now, not 3 months from now, now. From now until the end of the year we have to work together to make sure that we get the relief to the medallion owners who deserve and need it.

We are very hopeful. The TLC is

1 very hopeful that we can still come 2 3 together to ensure that all our 4 owner/drivers receive the legal support 5 and the financial report -- relief that they need. We very much look forward to 6 7 working with everyone to help the taxi 8 sector recover and prosper fully in the 9 years ahead. 10 And with that, I'd like to turn it 11 back over to our general counsel, Ryan 12 Wanttaja. Thank you. MR. WANTTAJA: Hi. Good morning, 13 14 commissioners. Just to start, it looks 15 like Commissioner Mitchell -- we lost 16 you on video. I just want to confirm 17 that you can hear me. 18 MR. MITCHELL: I can hear you. Can 19 you hear me on the phone? 20 MR. WANTTAJA: Yes, I can hear you 21 on the phone. So --22 (Inaudible due to crosstalk.) 23 MR. WANTTAJA: Okay. Well, when we 24 call the votes, I'll just have you 25 respond audibly instead, if that works.

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2	MR. MITCHELL: Yes.
3	MR. WANTTAJA: Okay. Great.
4	Good morning, commissioners. Our
5	next item on the agenda is approval of
6	the minutes. Before you are the minutes
7	from the September 27, 2021 commission
8	meeting. When I call a vote, I ask that
9	you raise your hand until it is counted,
10	and for Commissioner Mitchell to respond
11	audibly.
12	With that, all those in favor of
13	adopting the minutes from the September
14	27, 2021 commission meeting, please
15	raise your hands.
16	(Whereupon, a vote was cast.)
17	MR. WANTTAJA: And Commissioner
18	Mitchell?
19	MR. MITCHELL: I vote yes.
20	MR. WANTTAJA: Okay. And then with
21	that, the minutes are adopted
22	unanimously.
23	Our next and final item on the
24	agenda is a vote on the proposed
25	medallion relief program eligibility

1 rules. As previously stated, these 2 3 rules establish the criteria as to who is eligible to apply for a grant under 4 5 the Medallion Relief Program. Pursuant to the City Administrative Procedure 6 7 Act, these rules were published in the City Record on August 25, 2021. 8 9 commission held a public hearing on the 10 proposed rules on September 27, 2021. A 11 final version of the proposed rules was 12 posted on the TLC website on October 1, 2021, and finally, pursuant to CAPA 13 14 (phonetic), the final version of the 15 proposed rules and all written comments 16 received and video of the September 27th 17 hearing were emailed to each of the 18 commissioners on October 1, 2021. 19 So with that, I will call for a vote 20 on the rules. All those in favor of 21 adopting the proposed MRP rules before 22 you, please raise your hands. 23 (Whereupon, a vote was cast.) MR. WANTTAJA: And Commissioner Kest 24 25 I'm sorry, Commissioner Mitchell?

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               MR. MITCHELL: I vote yes.
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               MR. WANTTAJA: Yes. So --
               MS. POLANCO: I just want --
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               MR. WANTTAJA: I'm sorry. Go ahead
           Commissioner Polanco.
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               MS. POLANCO: I want to add a
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           statement. Do you want me to wait?
               MR. WANTTAJA: Yeah. I'll finish
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           the roll call here and then you can
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           speak.
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               MR. KEST: I'd also like to speak
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           for a second, but I'll defer to
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           procedure here to Commissioner Polanco
           who raised her hand before I did.
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               MR. WANTTAJA: Sure. Just for the
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           record, Commissioner Polanco, were you
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           raising your hand to vote yes on the
19
           rules?
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               MS. POLANCO: Yes.
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               MR. WANTTAJA: Okay. So with that,
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           I count five votes in favor.
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               All those opposed?
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                (Whereupon, a vote was cast.)
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               MR. WANTTAJA: One opposed. With
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1 that, the rules pass by a vote of five 2 3 to one. 4 I will pass this back to 5 Commissioner Jarmoszuk to open the floor for further comments. 6 CHAIR JARMOSZUK: Commissioner Kest, 7 8 you're welcome to speak first. 9 MR. KEST: Yeah. I actually have a 10 question whether why we had the vote 11 before we had an opportunity to discuss 12 it among ourselves. So, that's not the procedure of anything I've been part of 13 14 in the past. That's confusing to me. 15 But let me explain a little bit 16 about why I did vote against it, and why 17 I would hope other commissioners would, 18 if the opportunity allows, take the same 19 position. I have several questions and 20 concerns about this. 21 One is, every driver I've heard from 22 -- certainly every driver who testified 23 in our hearing, told us that the MRP was 24 inadequate, not sufficient to solve

their problems, and asked us to oppose

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the plan. So that weighs very heavily on my thinking.

Second, I was really struck by the testimony that, admittedly, was submitted late, by the attorney from NYLAG, but it was a packet, thank you Ryan, that was sent out yesterday. This attorney who worked with NYLAG, his sole job was representing medallion owners during this -- the MRP process, and his view and analysis was that most of the lenders were not willing to participate in the plan, and that even though many hundreds had signed up at the beginning of the process, at the top of the funnel, under his analysis, he thought very few were going to end up with modifications, given the fact that most lenders were not willing to participate in the plan.

And then the third point is that, you know, I tried to look pretty closely at the Taxi Worker Alliance plan -- proposal, and I find it very compelling.

1 I find the analysis that Columbia 2 3 University law professor wrote in the New York Times about it, seemed quite 4 5 compelling. I know there's been statements to the effect that the taxi 6 7 worker's family have the city on the hook for half a billion, or a billion 8 9 dollars, but that only assumes that drivers, once they receive significant 10 11 loan modifications, will default on their loans, and that seemed hard to 12 believe what happened, since we were 13 14 being told that the drivers who received 15 modifications under the current plan, 16 the MRP plan, which are much -- which 17 result in much higher payments, are 18 doing fine. So if those two drivers are 19 doing fine, then I'm sure the drivers 20 who received lower payments under the Taxi Worker Alliance Plan will be able 21 22 to make their payments, hopefully make a 23 living wage, and will not be in a 24 position where they have to default, 25 therefore the city won't be on the hook

1 for money in contrast that guarantee or 2 3 incentivize more lenders to get into the 4 program and reduce payments in a much 5 more sustainable level. So anyway, those are my three 6 7 comments about this. Again, I'm sorry 8 we had to vote before we had a chance to 9 discuss this among ourselves, but I feel 10 like I needed to go on the record and 11 let people know how I feel about this. 12 So thanks for the opportunity. 13 CHAIR JARMOSZUK: We appreciate your thoughts, and if you have any you'd like 14 15 to share about the actual program that 16 we just voted on, that would be helpful 17 as well. 18 All right. We can move on to 19 Commissioner Polanco. 20 MS. POLANCO: Okay. Thank you. 21 Basically, at the end, I was going 22 to state the reason as to why I was 23 voting yes. So I'm just going to read 24 out what I had. 25 So I have heard the cry, the

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despair, the anger, the frustration of many of you regarding the economic decline to get on the street, which has had a detrimental impact on the life of many. And this year, the city made a commitment of \$65,000,000 to find -- to fund the Medallion Relief Program to bring somewhat of a relief to the industry. Is it enough? No. It is not enough, and there's a mobilization for more funds, to get commitment from City Council to get more funds, to get commitment from Congress to get more funds, and yet we're waiting for these funds. We're waiting for more funds to come. I have heard -- I have been told "Give it time. Give us time." Just to wait. But today's rule is setting eligibility requirements and getting authorization for the program to continue operating. So I voted yes,

because I feel there's immediate relief.

Immediate relief is necessary, and I

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           voted yes because the uncertainty in
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           waiting for something better will add
           more despair to medallion owners who are
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            in desperate need today. The money is
           available now, and it is going to be
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           distributed. And as I said before, you
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           need to keep the pressure, because
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            that's how change is made. Keep up the
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           pressure.
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                That's what I wanted to say. Thank
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           you.
                CHAIR JARMOSZUK: Thank you for your
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14
            comments, commissioner.
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                Does anyone else have anything they
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           would like to say?
17
                (No response.)
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                CHAIR JARMOSZUK: Ryan, do we have
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           additional business to discuss?
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                MR. WANTTAJA: No, there's no
            additional business. You're free to
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22
           adjourn the meeting.
                CHAIR JARMOSZUK: I'd like to thank
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            everybody for their time, for their
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            thoughts, and for staying, of course,
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            for so long on this issue that precedes
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            all of our tenures on -- on -- on the
            commission. We are, again, still
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            hopeful that there are opportunities for
            unification and to continue forward, to
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            help all the medallion owners in need,
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            and this is an enormous step forward for
            all of us, and I'm -- I'm -- I'm
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            grateful that we have arrived at the
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            juncture. We were certainly not here in
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            January or in previous times.
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                With that, I'd like to adjourn the
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            meeting and I wish you all a happy and
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            safe day.
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                Thank you.
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                (Thereupon, the examination was
            concluded at 10:31 a.m.)
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                 CERTIFICATE
     STATE OF NEW YORK)
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     COUNTY OF NASSAU )
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           I, JAMES A. TETTA, a Notary Public within
     and for the State of New York, do hereby
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     certify:
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           That the witness whose examination is
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     hereinbefore set forth was duly sworn and that
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     such an examination is a true record of the
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     testimony given by such a witness.
14
           I further certify that I am not related to
15
     any of these parties to this action by blood or
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     marriage, and that I am not in any way
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     interested in the outcome of this matter.
           IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
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     hand this 6th day of October, 2021.
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