



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 31, 2018
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION AND NYC COUNCIL ANNOUNCE NEW EFFORT
TO CONFRONT TAXI AND FHV SERVICE REFUSALS**

New office will address refusals of service by taxis and FHV's that affect people of color and outer borough residents in New York

NEW YORK – Mayor Bill de Blasio and City Council Speaker Corey Johnson today announced the creation of a new office within the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission, the sole purpose of which is to ensure that all passengers receive the service they expect, and to which they are legally entitled. The new Office of Inclusion, originally proposed by Council Members Donovan Richards, will focus on the development and implementation of anti-discrimination training for drivers, and will expand on its public education campaign, encouraging passengers to file complaints with the TLC when denied service, so that their experience may be investigated, and appropriate actions taken.

"Service refusal is real, unacceptable and we're going to fight it in every way we can," said **Mayor de Blasio**. "These new steps will help ensure that anyone considering this unfair and illegal practice knows that it's wrong, it carries severe consequences, and it has no place in this industry."

"Today we take a major step forward in ending service refusal once and for all in the taxi and for-hire vehicle industry," said **Council Speaker Corey Johnson**. "I congratulate my colleague Council Member Donovan Richards on this vital idea becoming a reality and I look forward to working with the TLC Office of Inclusion to ensure that there is zero tolerance for service refusal in our city."

"Denying someone taxi service because of the color of their skin, their gender or their destination is simply unacceptable and has gone on for far too long in New York City," said **Council Member Donovan Richards**. "While we work to improve conditions for drivers, the TLC Office of Inclusion will be working to ensure that all passengers receive the same level of respect and service. I'd like to thank Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Johnson for addressing my concerns and creating this office to ensure that our taxi and for-hire-vehicle reforms promote and advance inclusion."

"There is nothing more fundamental to what we do than making sure New Yorkers are welcomed and served into our city's yellow cabs," said **TLC Chair Meera Joshi**. "Service refusal in

general, and bias-based refusal in particular, is a terrible experience for its victims -- it is visceral, hurtful, and just wrong."

"Unfortunately service refusals by taxis and for-hire-vehicle's on the basis of skin color, religion, gender or pick-up and drop-off destinations are an issue that has a long history in New York City. Over the years, many residents have complained of vehicle's refusing rides to and from my district. I commend Council Member Richards, and his continued efforts to combat this issue through the Office of Inclusion within TLC focusing on discrimination that's often overlooked. The creation of this office is a step in the right direction to help ensure equality and inclusion for those that utilize taxi and for-hire-vehicles," said **Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel**.

"No one should be denied transportation because of the color of their skin, but we all know it happens much too often in New York to people trying to hail a cab. This office will work to address this long-standing problem and I am proud to support it for my constituents, the majority of whom are people of color," said **Council Member Diana Ayala**.

"Service discrimination is still the reality for far too many New Yorkers of color, depriving them of a critical transportation service in all five boroughs. I thank my colleague, Council Member Richards, for his leadership on this issue and look forward to supporting the important work that lies ahead for the TLC Office of Inclusion," said **Council Member Laurie Cumbo**.

"For too long, people of color in this city have struggled to hail rides to and from their neighborhoods due to livery drivers' refusal to give them service. While innovation in the sharing economy has meant increased access to ride-hailing services, the problem of service refusals within the taxi industry persists. Dedicating an office to combat service refusals is a necessary step toward making transportation more accessible for all New Yorkers, especially those in communities of color," said **Council Member Robert E. Cornegy**.

"I applaud Council Member Richards' efforts to institute an Office of Inclusion to aggressively address the longstanding, ongoing issue of selective discrimination within the taxi industry," said **Council Member Debi Rose**. "As a member of the Committee for For-Hire Vehicles, I will monitor the progress of this office and the experiences of people of color, in particular African-Americans, a group that has been disproportionately impacted by these practices."

The bulk of TLC's service refusal violations are in response to passenger complaints. TLC's prosecution unit investigates each complaint thoroughly. Drivers face significant fines if cases are substantiated, and ultimately license revocation if they continue refusing service. Service refusal violations lead to penalties of \$500 for the first violation; second violation in 24 months is \$1000 and possible 30 day suspension; third violation within 36 months is \$1000 and revocation prehearing.

The TLC recognizes the continued challenge many Black, Latino, other communities of color and outer borough residents face when hailing taxis and getting service to their destination in NYC. The TLC has provided outreach and education to drive down service refusal numbers. The proposed TLC Office of Inclusion will be tasked with:

- Encouraging service refusal complaints (based on a protected class including ethnicity or race or gender, or destination) to be submitted to the TLC;

- Prosecuting service refusal complaints provided by the public;
- Increasing and insuring taxi service in outer boroughs;
- Aggressive outreach to the TLC's regulated driver communities on NYC's zero tolerance for service refusals, and the significant penalties they face if they make the wrong choices. Refusals include not stopping when hailed, refusing to go to location requested, and not accepting passengers;
- Outreach to community groups whose members have experienced service refusals, to stress the importance of reporting service refusals;
- Overseeing production and roll-out of a ride refusal awareness campaign, including a Public Service Announcement that will be distributed citywide to venues outside of taxis to ensure robust exposure to the public. This PSA will also be incorporated into new and existing training for drivers. The awareness campaign will also be shown on local TV, heard on local radio, and transformed into images for digital and printed outreach materials;
- Develop and provide mandated Continuing Driver Training prior to license renewal. Training includes diversity training and review of zero tolerance rules and penalties;
- Recruitment efforts focused on encouraging members of underrepresented communities to become drivers;
- Encourage extensive citywide coverage by TLC drivers in all communities and ensure that the public has data on service levels in their local community by providing metrics on service levels by geography.

###