



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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Michael A. Nutter, Mayor
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My name is Lance Haver. I am the director of the Mayor's Office of Consumer Affairs. I am here today to add my voice to the demand that taxi cab drivers be afforded workers compensation coverage. This is not just a workers right issue, although the well being of workers should be in and of itself sufficient reason to pass this legislation, it is also an issue of consumer rights. After all who of us here today would knowingly get in a cab if we knew the driver was suffering too badly to drive safely?

When a consumer gets into a taxi he has the right to safe transportation for the agreed upon price. When taxi cab drivers cannot receive workers compensation for injuries, they are more likely to return to work when they are unfit to drive. The reality is, the majority of taxi cab drivers live so close to the financial edge that they cannot afford to be without income. That is why they face severe economic pressure to return to work before they are healthy enough to be safe drivers.

Such an inhumane system not only puts the taxi cab driver at risk, it also puts the rider, other drivers and even pedestrians at risk.

This places sever stress on the entire industry. The more accidents, the more pressure there is on the PPA to regulate the industry and fine medallion owners for leasing to drivers unfit to drive. The more fines, the higher the costs for the owners, the less profit and the more they attempt to squeeze money out of the system. At some point the system will reach the death spiral where every action taken in an attempt to improve the economic condition will worsen it.

I believe a careful analysis will show that not only is it in the best interest of the taxi cab drivers, consumers, other car drivers and pedestrians to make it possible for injured taxi cab drivers to recover fully before returning to work, but it is also in the best interests of the entire industry as it will provide a better product, reduce fines and make law suits less universal. And the best way to allow taxi cab drivers to fully recover is to ensure that they have access to workers compensation.