

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
AND
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA

MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
ROOM 60, EAST WING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2019
9:00 A.M.

PRESENTATION ON
CHALLENGES FOR PEOPLE TRAVELING
WITH A DISABILITY

BEFORE:

HONORABLE DAVID R. MILLARD, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN,
TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HONORABLE KAREN BOBACK
HONORABLE BUD COOK
HONORABLE GARY DAY
HONORABLE JIM GREGORY
HONORABLE MARCIA M. HAHN
HONORABLE DOYLE HEFFLEY
HONORABLE SUSAN C. HELM
HONORABLE DAVID M. MALONEY, SR.
HONORABLE DAN MOUL
HONORABLE PARKE WENTLING

* * * * *

Debra B. Miller
dbmreporting@msn.com

BEFORE (continued):

HONORABLE MARK LONGIETTI, DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN,
TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HONORABLE DANIELLE FRIEL OTTEN
HONORABLE CAROL HILL-EVANS
HONORABLE MALCOLM KENYATTA
HONORABLE MAUREEN E. MADDEN
HONORABLE MELISSA L. SHUSTERMAN
HONORABLE WENDY ULLMAN

HONORABLE GENE DIGIROLAMO, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN,
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
HONORABLE BARBARA GLEIM
HONORABLE JIM GREGORY
HONORABLE DOYLE HEFFLEY
HONORABLE JOHNATHAN D. HERSHEY
HONORABLE LORI MIZGORSKI
HONORABLE F. TODD POLINCHOCK
HONORABLE JAMES B. STRUZZI II
HONORABLE TARAH TOOHIL
HONORABLE MAUREEN E. MADDEN, ACTING DEMOCRATIC
CHAIRMAN, HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
HONORABLE DANILO BURGOS
HONORABLE ISABELLA V. FITZGERALD
HONORABLE KRISTINE C. HOWARD
HONORABLE STEPHEN KINSEY

COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

ALLEN TAYLOR
MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DENISE MURRAY
MAJORITY ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT,
TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DANIELLE BOWERS
DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
JOSHUA MYERS
DEMOCRATIC RESEARCH ANALYST,
TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MELANIE BROWN
MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

I N D E X

TESTIFIERS

* * *

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
JEFFREY ISEMAN PUBLIC POLICY AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR, PENNSYLVANIA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (PA SILC).....	8
MATTHEW R. SEELEY, ESQ. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PENNSYLVANIA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (PA SILC).....	15
HOPE VANDERGRIFT OWNER/ADMINISTRATOR, HOPE HOUSE HOME HEALTH CARE, LLC.....	27
CHRISTINE A. KIRLIN, ESQ. DIRECTOR, TAXICAB AND LIMOUSINE DIVISION, PHILADELPHIA PARKING AUTHORITY (PPA).....	36
ALEXA BRILL SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE MANAGER, THE ARC OF PA.....	47
SHELLI LANDIS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE ARC OF PA.....	55
WILLIAM SCHMID DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PHILADELPHIA PARKING AUTHORITY (PPA).....	57

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

* * *

See submitted written testimony and handouts online under "Show:" at:

https://www.legis.State.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/TR/Public/tr_finder_public_action.cfm?tr_doc_typ=T&billBody=&billTyp=&billNbr=&hearing_month=&hearing_day=&hearing_year=&NewCommittee=Human+Services&subcommittee=&subject=&bill=&new_title=&new_salutation=&new_first_name=&new_middle_name=&new_last_name=&new_suffix=&hearing_loc

P R O C E E D I N G S

* * *

MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Good morning, everyone. I would like to call this meeting of the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee and the Human Services Committee to order.

I would like to remind everybody that this committee hearing is being recorded, so if you would kindly turn off all electronic devices, that would be very helpful.

And the first order of business today will be the Pledge of Allegiance. Would you join me, please.

(The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: The topic of today's hearing is challenges for people who have a disability who are traveling. And for everybody's information, we do have interpreters who are with us today and will be doing appropriate sign language and other things as needed so that we can communicate with everybody, whether it be on the Committee or in the audience.

Now, the first thing that we'll do here is go to Chairman Gene DiGirolamo of the Human Services Committee -- he is the Majority Chair of that -- and ask him if he has

1 comments.

2 Chairman DiGirolamo.

3 MAJORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN DIGIROLAMO:

4 Thank you, Dave.

5 And I just want to welcome everybody that is here
6 today. This is a continuation of the last hearing we had a
7 few weeks ago. It's a really, really important issue.

8 At our last hearing, we talked about maybe
9 getting a resolution, putting a resolution together to let
10 some entity, maybe a joint State Government Committee, to
11 take a look at the issue and maybe come up with and do a
12 study.

13 And they're working on the resolution. I have
14 been informed that it's almost ready to go. So within the
15 next week or two, we will have that resolution ready and be
16 ready to pass it around to everybody for comments.

17 So I'm looking forward to the hearing today, and
18 it's good to be with everybody.

19 Thank you, Dave.

20 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you,
21 Chairman.

22 Next we'll have comments from the Minority
23 Chairman of Tourism, Mark Longietti.

24 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Thank you,
25 Chairman Millard.

1 It's good to see everybody here today. Certainly
2 our last hearing was, I know, an eye-opener for me. We
3 take for granted our abilities to travel relatively easily
4 and freely and to recognize the special and unique
5 challenges that folks with disabilities and their families
6 face.

7 So I'm looking forward to the testimony this
8 morning as well so that we can learn more and hopefully be
9 part of a solution.

10 Thank you, Chairman.

11 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you,
12 Chairman Longietti.

13 Now we're going to recognize Representative
14 Madden for some opening comments.

15 ACTING MINORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN MADDEN:
16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Good morning, everyone.

18 I echo the sentiments of my colleagues and say
19 that I am looking forward to today's hearing or meeting.

20 I know that as Legislators, it certainly is our
21 responsibility to legislate in a way that affords all
22 people a quality of life, and certainly being able to
23 travel and get from point A to point B with the least
24 amount of hassle is important. So I'm looking forward to
25 this hearing.

1 Thank you.

2 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you.

3 The topic of today's hearing, again, is for
4 people who have disabilities and some of the obstacles that
5 they may encounter when traveling. And what we're going to
6 do today is not depart from normal procedure, but we have
7 got testimony here -- this is going to be a very long
8 hearing -- testimony that will take about an hour. So I'm
9 going to ask the Members to hold off on your questions
10 until all the testifiers have testified, and then once the
11 last testifier has completed their testimony, then we will
12 open it up to the Members for questions.

13 Our first testifier today is going to be
14 Jeffrey Iseman. He is the Public Policy and Outreach
15 Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Statewide Independent
16 Living Council. And I will invite you to begin at any
17 time.

18 MR. ISEMAN: Okay. Thank you, Chairman Millard.

19 Good morning. My name is Jeff Iseman. I am the
20 Public Policy and Outreach Coordinator for the Pennsylvania
21 SILC, the Statewide Independent Living Council. We work
22 with the 17 Centers for Independent Living in Pennsylvania.
23 We also work nationally with the National Council on
24 Independent Living.

25 And on transportation issues in this State, we

1 work with a group called the Pennsylvania Transportation
2 Alliance. It's an ad hoc group that has supported some
3 issues like getting accessible transportation networking
4 companies -- Uber, Lyft, and the LLC a few years ago --
5 into legislation that passed. We also were active in
6 getting the Persons with Disabilities Shared Ride Program,
7 which started during the Ridge Administration, and
8 66 counties were added in Act 89 of 2013.

9 And today we're going to focus on just travel
10 issues, mentioning transportation first, and just all
11 accessibilities. The SILC supports accessible options for
12 not only travel but transportation in every area of life,
13 accessible and affordable in rural, urban, and suburban
14 areas.

15 In offering testimony, we just wanted to comment
16 and thank Representative DiGirolamo for his comments on
17 doing a resolution with the State Government Commission.
18 We have some matters that you might want to consider in
19 that resolution. Here are some of our thoughts:

20 Right now, the Governor's Office, as far as the
21 State agencies under his directive, can provide that all
22 State-owned properties, particularly areas of tourism and
23 disability services, are compliant with the ADA act. We
24 understand that there may be some related budget costs when
25 you're doing upgrades to the properties or moving around.

1 We think that's the time that you could look at the
2 accessibility options and maybe factor those into the cost
3 of basically doing business for the Commonwealth.

4 Updates should be involved for folks, not only
5 considering physical accessibility issues but also for
6 those who have blindness or visual disabilities, the deaf
7 and hard of hearing, and folks who are deaf-blind.

8 It is also worth noting that when folks -- a lot
9 of folks use strollers. It's not the same as ADA
10 accessibility. Just because you push a stroller across a
11 curb cut doesn't make it fully accessible.

12 Some of the other areas specifically under
13 State Government that we would like to see accessibility
14 improvements upon are:

- 15
- 16 • State Parks.
- 17 • Governor's regional offices and Legislators'
18 offices, both here and in the district.
- 19 • The State Capitol in general.
- 20 • Historic properties under Pennsylvania
21 Government.
- 22

23 One of the things we hear sometimes when we
24 bring up accessibility issues is, well, it's a
25 historic-designated property; we can't do that. We don't

1 want whatever it is to lose the essence of what attracts
2 tourism and folks' interest. Having said that, we do want
3 to make it accessible for as many people as possible.

- 4
- 5 • Basically, any properties and services under
- 6 Pennsylvania tourism.
- 7 • When you're looking at a lot of grants to
- 8 local communities, encourage them just to
- 9 continue to do curb cuts and involve folks
- 10 from the Centers for Independent Living and
- 11 the disability community to make sure that the
- 12 curb cuts are done.
- 13

14 You're from all over Pennsylvania. You can go
15 everywhere and see how different things are done, and
16 sometimes what is considered or what folks say is
17 accessible really isn't.

- 18
- 19 • State incentives for nonprofits and businesses
- 20 to become ADA compliant. Just letting folks
- 21 know so they're aware of that.
- 22 • One thing we hear about, and Matt may offer
- 23 this in his comments and others may say the
- 24 same is, lack of accessible parking spots,
- 25 including here at the Capitol. But it's not

1 limited to the Capitol, but other areas of
2 tourism and other places where State
3 Government offices are.

- 4 • As far as transportation options, we need to
5 improve and increase the accessible
6 transportation options, both public and
7 private options.

8

9 Right now, we have limited hours basically for
10 very early mornings, evenings, weekends, and holidays.
11 With paratransit, it basically only runs certain hours,
12 traditionally business hours, with a few exceptions.

13 We mention transportation networking companies
14 and just a need for more wheelchair accessibility vehicles,
15 or WAV. Right now, those exist in Philadelphia but really
16 nowhere else in the Commonwealth.

17 We would be remiss if we didn't mention Amtrak.
18 A lot of folks do use that with disabilities, but one of
19 the problems you have is not all the stations are ADA
20 accessible. Probably two-thirds in Pennsylvania of
21 Amtrak's 24 stations aren't. And the State does provide
22 funding for Amtrak services and the upgrades to stations.

23 Also, some of the stations under SEPTA and PAT
24 are not fully accessible, and we also mention like ships
25 and boats. Basically, anything that is transportation, we

1 want it to be accessible.

2

3 • And I also mention the lifts. When the ADA
4 came out in 1990 and then a few years later,
5 we had folks, basically the chairs were for up
6 to 600 pounds. The lifts were basically able
7 to accommodate folks. But now with power
8 wheelchairs, heavier engines, and larger
9 individuals using those chairs, we need a
10 higher threshold on that.

11

12 We also spoke to some of the Centers for
13 Independent Living and our Board Members when we were
14 getting comments.

15 You mentioned air travel in hearing 1. Briefly,
16 just some of the issues we hear about are improper handling
17 of durable medical equipment, a lot of times where it's
18 basically the power of the wheelchairs gets trashed or the
19 scooters whenever they're getting packed by the airline
20 staff. There's also the issue of invasive pat-downs at
21 times with TSA staff. You also have a lot of the airline
22 bathrooms or lavatories aren't really accessible. And
23 in-flight communications for folks who are deaf and/or
24 blind or deaf-blind, particularly for like in-flight
25 entertainment, movies, things like that.

1 Some of the museums -- and not all of them are
2 under the State. Some are Federal. Some are private --
3 still have accessibility issues.

4 Basically a lot of the parks, the grants that go
5 to local and community parks and trails, still lack
6 accessibility. Some of the gravel sections are problematic
7 for folks with wheelchairs to navigate.

8 One area that folks don't think about is caves.
9 Again, we don't want to change the nature of that, but it
10 is something that if you're in a power wheelchair or
11 scooter, it's really hard to get in. A lot of times, you
12 can't get in to that.

13 We mentioned government offices, just working on
14 that.

15 And we just seek, again, we want to improve the
16 accessibility, but we don't want to diminish what the asset
17 is in terms of tourism and a historic nature. We just want
18 to make it more accessible.

19 One other comment is, again, just working with
20 CILs. We have 17 in Pennsylvania. A lot of them have
21 basically ADA compliance specialists. They could work with
22 government. If you get a call from business owners, they
23 need to be accessible. We have folks that are accessible.
24 The Center for Independent Living here in Camp Hill is a
25 good example of that. They actually have two people that

1 are ADA certified.

2 And one other last comment before Matt goes is, a
3 lot of us prefer the people-first language when we talk
4 about people with disabilities, and we tend not to use
5 "special needs," "handicapped." People have all needs.
6 It's just sometimes folks need accommodations to meet those
7 needs. They're not necessarily -- they're not any better
8 or worse than anybody else; it's just being able to meet
9 everybody's needs.

10 I'll turn it over to Matt. Thank you.

11 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Next we have
12 Matt Seeley, who is the Director of the Pennsylvania
13 Statewide Independent Living Council.

14 Matt, you may begin when you're ready.

15 MR. SEELEY: Thank you so much.

16 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: And please
17 get as close to the mic as you can.

18 MR. SEELEY: I'll try.

19 I'll just wait a second for the interpreters.

20 My name is Matt Seeley. Again, like the Chairman
21 said, I am the Director of the Statewide Independent Living
22 Council.

23 Can you hear me? Am I close enough?

24 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Can you move
25 a little closer?

1 MR. SEELEY: Hopefully that will work.

2 First off, I would like to applaud you for having
3 interpreters today. I come to a lot of these hearings, and
4 there's really ever an interpreter. So I'm glad that we're
5 finally catching up with that.

6 The second thing, I mean, we talk about traveling
7 and going to restaurants and whatnot. I mean, I can't even
8 fit under the table here, let alone a restaurant, so I'm
9 sure you can imagine. This is not an overly huge chair,
10 but I don't fit anywhere.

11 People criticize me a lot for being a glass half
12 empty, and I was going to come here with a great story
13 about the three parking lots Jeff was talking about earlier
14 and how they're always full. And of course the one day I
15 drive my chair up here, because I can never get a parking
16 spot, and the one day I do, they're all empty. You know,
17 that's fate for you.

18 You know, I didn't really know what to talk about
19 here, so I kind of just took a shotgun approach and picked
20 a couple of topics. Unfortunately, they're all going to be
21 negative. I don't have a lot of -- actually, I will start
22 with the one, the one positive.

23 Do you guys all have this already? All right.
24 And it's the one that I talk about the least because I
25 don't really have any complaints.

1 The city bus in Harrisburg here, I don't know if
2 it's the same as other ones, but I like it. You know, it
3 gets me around. They have tie-downs. They rarely use
4 them. The bus drivers are generally nice. But, you know,
5 there are set times. It's going to be here at this time;
6 it's going to get me there at that time. It works okay.
7 As for the other stuff, not so much.

8 I guess I'll start with the train, as I have in
9 my comments.

10 It's very convenient for me. There's usually a
11 disabled car that I can fit in. However, usually people
12 are traveling from here to Philly or New York or wherever,
13 and they have got suitcases, briefcases, and they love to
14 just stack it in the disability section. So when I'm
15 boarding on the train, I'll have the ushers, or whatever
16 they're called on the train, the first thing they have to
17 do is move all the luggage out of the way. So if I wasn't
18 a spectacle enough, let's make room for the big wheelchair.

19 Like I said, in a minority of the cars, they do
20 make room for wheelchairs eventually. Jeff talked about
21 the stops.

22 There's no tie-downs on trains, especially, I
23 take the train to Philly, I wouldn't say a lot, but often,
24 and that's almost like a roller coaster. If you're on a
25 chair, it's not -- I'm not nailed down to the floor. Yes,

1 it's not going to roll, but, I mean, I'm holding on a lot
2 of times like I'm on a roller coaster.

3 I mean, again, Amtrak trains. I guess my common
4 theme through this is going to be my wheelchair, scooters.
5 It wasn't envisioned when the ADA was passed, when train
6 cars were built, so I guess we are retrofitting a lot of
7 stuff to accommodate things like this. But it is quite an
8 experience. I mean, I don't need to go to an amusement
9 park; I can just ride the train to Philly.

10 Airplanes. Like I say in my paper here, I
11 acquired my disability in 1996 after a car accident. I
12 went on planes all the time. I have been to the Bahamas,
13 California. I mean, I'm not going to make a list, but a
14 number of times. Since then, I have not flown. I will not
15 fly. I have heard too many horror stories of someone in a
16 chair like this flying.

17 I mean, I'll take a trip to Florida, wherever,
18 and my chair will end up in New Mexico. You know, what do
19 I do when I get to Florida? And, you know, they can give
20 me a manual chair. I cannot push a manual chair. Do I
21 have my girlfriend or whoever I'm traveling with push me
22 around in a manual chair for my trip? That's---

23 And I'll just read this the way I said it,
24 because it's really -- this is how it has been explained to
25 me. When you get to an airport, and first off, to explain

1 that a little bit further, a chair like this has to go into
2 luggage, cargo. I can't ride this on the train -- or the
3 plane; sorry. So when I get to the airport, they check
4 this into luggage. They put me into a manual chair, so
5 somebody else has to push me around.

6 They typically will board you first, because if
7 they don't, then there I am, you know, here comes the guy
8 in the wheelchair getting on the plane. But the regular
9 manual wheelchair doesn't fit on a plane, so they have to
10 put you in a "Hannibal Lecter" chair. Everybody has seen
11 that movie, and, you know, the straight-backed chair and
12 they got the mask on you? They don't do the mask, luckily,
13 but they do use that kind of chair. And they wheel you
14 down the aisle, hopefully first, and getting off hopefully
15 last so that you're not a complete spectacle. But that
16 chair is not friendly, to say the least.

17 You know, again, your chair and luggage, my
18 predecessor, one of my predecessors said she was on the
19 plane watching them load her chair into storage, cargo,
20 whatever they call it, and the chair was upside down on the
21 ramp going up the escalator kind of thing, whatever they
22 call that, and she was horrified to watch it topple off the
23 conveyor belt thing.

24 I mean, this chair is my legs. Without it, I'm
25 not going anywhere. So to watch it just fall--- And, you

1 know, there's insurance, there's all kinds of things to get
2 a new chair, but a chair like this, it just doesn't come
3 tomorrow if it's broken. You know, it took me 6 months to
4 get this chair when I first got it. So you can imagine
5 fixing it is not an easy thing.

6 Ah, what do we got here. And this chair was
7 about \$20,000, so it's almost a car. Well, it is a car.

8 City bus, yes.

9 Boat. I do not travel by boat. I've been on the
10 ferry across the river. I used to swim. I like to swim.
11 I do not want to get anywhere near water with this thing
12 and fry it out, because, again, you know, if anything
13 happens to it, I'm kind of stuck. Well, I'm not even kind
14 of stuck, I'm stuck.

15 Shared ride. A lot of people are dependent on
16 shared ride. Jeff talked about it a little bit. I can't
17 stand it. I won't use it. When my car broke down a year
18 or so ago, I drove my chair across the river. It took me a
19 half hour each way because I won't wait for shared ride.

20 The hours, you know, they have a little window:
21 we'll pick you up between 9 and 10, somewhere in there.
22 Who knows how long it will take me to get to work. I can't
23 -- you know, how can anyone with a set schedule live like
24 that?

25 So, I mean, it's okay if you want to plan a trip

1 -- what's today, Wednesday? -- Friday to go to the movies,
2 you know. All right, maybe you'll be able to see a movie
3 at a certain time, maybe, but I'd rather take the bus
4 because I know what time it's going to pick me up and I
5 know what time it's going to get me there. Shared ride,
6 it's a roll of the dice. It's a crapshoot.

7 They have like a 30-minute window, like I say in
8 here. I have waited in the rain because there's no shelter
9 around it. And where I live now, I live in Pennsylvania
10 Place, which is a few blocks away, but you can't see the
11 street from the building. So if you're not right there
12 when they show up, they no-show you, and if you get
13 no-showed so many times, you lose your privileges.

14 Driving. I love to drive. I have a car, imagine
15 that. Everybody is amazed when they see my car. It has
16 got all this magical equipment in there. And I had to get
17 the windows tinted because every time I'd stop at a
18 stoplight, people are just like [staring]. You know, it's
19 really funny.

20 It has got a foldout ramp, which makes parking
21 kind of, it's almost like a game where I can park, because
22 the ramp comes out the right-hand side, so I either have to
23 be in a parking lot all the way to the right or in one of
24 the designated spots, which are typically all used up. I
25 don't know what the percentage is of parking lot spaces

1 that have to be designated for disabled vehicles, but it's
2 too low. I mean, I know you can go to some places and
3 they're never used and then other places where they're all
4 used. It's kind of ironic.

5 I mean, again, I love driving. I have fatigue
6 with driving. I can only drive so far, because unlike, I
7 hate using the word "able-bodied," but, you know, most
8 people are using their feet and their arms at the same
9 time, and you can coast, you can cruise-control, and kind
10 of just hold the wheel with two fingers. I mean, I used to
11 drive like that. But now, I mean, I drive with my hands,
12 so I'm constantly, one arm is steering and one arm is
13 gas/brake. So, I mean, 3 or 4 hours of doing that, I'm
14 exhausted. Now, I typically don't go anywhere over
15 3 hours.

16 I have been to Erie, and I almost had to stay in
17 bed the next day because I was that exhausted. So I'm just
18 relaying that as kind of an example of the experience.

19 Parking is always an issue for the one reason I
20 said. Sometimes there are no disabled spots, or if there
21 is a disabled spot, they don't have that cross-section
22 where I can let down the ramp.

23 I come out of a grocery -- it's funny. I come
24 out of a grocery store, and more often than I would like to
25 say, that cross-section where nobody is supposed to park,

1 someone is parked there. And even funnier -- I take
2 pictures of it; I'll put it on Facebook or whatever --
3 someone with a disabled vehicle like mine is parked in
4 there. I mean, of all people, I can't understand why they
5 would do that, but. You know, I need to -- I wish I could
6 call the police and say, you know, do something about this,
7 but they would just laugh at me.

8 Tolls on the highway, thank God for E-ZPass,
9 because, I mean, throwing 75 cents into that little net is
10 never going to happen. I mean, you might as well just send
11 me a ticket because I can't do that.

12 If there is no E-ZPass, I sit there. I have done
13 it in the past. I'll just sit at the toll and beep the
14 horn. Maybe somebody will eventually come, because I
15 really can't use the thing.

16 Gas stations. Thankfully there's Giant and
17 Sheetz. You can call Sheetz, and somebody will come out
18 eventually. If I'm traveling in other towns, uh. I mean,
19 I have to get out of the ramp, go into the store, and ask
20 somebody to help me.

21 I mean, again, these are things that people just
22 don't think about. I don't blame anybody or I'm not
23 criticizing people. It's just--- I mean, it's great that
24 I can drive and I can travel. I just don't think it was
25 anticipated, or whatever the right word is.

1 Am I running over time? I don't know how long
2 I've been talking. Should I wrap it up?

3 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: You can
4 continue until your story is completed.

5 MR. SEELEY: Okay.

6 Sheetz and Giant, I talked about that. The
7 convenience store, the same thing.

8 You know, I love McDonald's. I really don't like
9 the food there, but it's convenient. I can go through
10 there. I can even pull up -- they have that, they have a
11 new thing, where you can order on your phone and park out
12 in one of those spots and they'll just bring it to my car.
13 I just pull up there. I don't call ahead. I pull up and
14 pull right in there and I order right from the parking lot.
15 It works great. Unfortunately, I have to eat McDonald's,
16 though.

17 Hotels I do. I go to DC a lot. DC is very
18 accessible. Philly is, you know, not so bad. They do have
19 that WAV vehicle, wheelchair accessible vehicles. Uber is
20 in DC. It's really nice. A lot of the regular city taxis
21 are really nice there. None of that stuff is here. I
22 can't explain it.

23 Hotels. When I go to a major hotel and you have
24 to get parking, usually the valet takes your car. They
25 can't drive my car. You know, my wheelchair is the

1 driver's seat. I pull into the car and my wheelchair locks
2 into the floor. So there is no way a valet can drive it.
3 It just can't happen. So I always have a problem with
4 that.

5 I'm almost done.

6 I use a lift to get in and out of bed. You
7 probably have no idea what I'm talking about. But it's
8 like a, it looks like a crane almost, a miniature crane,
9 and it picks me in and out, but in order for that to work,
10 it needs to be able to slide under the bed. Most hotels
11 have a box frame that goes all the way down to the floor,
12 and this thing needs like a 3-inch clearance. So I have to
13 call ahead everywhere I go to make sure that they have some
14 kind of either roll-out bed or something that can
15 accommodate that.

16 Bathrooms are rarely big enough. Just doorways,
17 I can't get through.

18 There is usually a limited number of accessible
19 rooms. I mean, as you can see, anywhere, anything I do,
20 takes planning. I can't just expect them to be able to
21 accommodate me.

22 And I'll sum it up.

23 Like I say here in the end, in the end, I have
24 had problems with travel that have plagued me for many
25 years now. I have missed many weddings, family vacations,

1 holidays, and trips to restaurants, just to name a few,
2 because of these travel problems.

3 I have had cousins that have gotten married in
4 Martha's Vineyard and, you know, pretty islands, and I say,
5 have a great time, you know, send me pictures, because it's
6 just not going to happen.

7 I think hearings like this, like I say, are a
8 good start, but these issues, I think, probably should come
9 before a number of committees, because I think they affect
10 or a number of committees can have an impact on that.

11 I have been in support of a Disability Caucus
12 here that is not to a specific disability but disability in
13 general, and I hope something can be established to that
14 end.

15 But, I mean, I thank you for having this hearing,
16 because I think talking about it and hearing these kinds of
17 stories is at least, you know, opening a door to helping
18 solve some of these issues.

19 So thank you.

20 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you.

21 Mr. Iseman and Mr. Seeley, thank you both for
22 your testimony.

23 Next we're going to have Hope Vandergrift, who is
24 with the Hope House Home Health Care.

25 Hope, you may begin your testimony.

1 MS. VANDERGRIFT: Thank you.

2 I want to start by just saying good morning,
3 Chairmen DiGirolamo, Cruz, Millard, Longietti, and Members
4 of the House Human Services and Tourism Committees.

5 Thank you for inviting me to speak on behalf of
6 those with intellectual disabilities and physical
7 disabilities. My name is Hope Vandergrift. I am the Owner
8 and Administrator of Hope House Home Health Care out of
9 Sayre, Pennsylvania.

10 I come to you today to speak to you about many
11 different aspects that have to do with individuals with
12 disabilities when traveling. It is my intention to speak
13 openly, honestly, and be transparent about each of the
14 points listed so that you all have a better idea of the
15 realities that these individuals face.

16 I have a short outline I had given all of you so
17 that I could stay on point of what I was going to talk
18 about, and as I looked at the agenda and what we were
19 really speaking about, I tweaked it a lot. So you're not
20 going to be able to follow me, and I'm going to apologize
21 for that.

22 The first thing that I wanted to just put out
23 there was some of the facts when it comes to traveling with
24 disabilities. And 25.5 million Americans 5 years of age
25 and older report limiting their travel because of

1 disabilities. Out of those 25.5 million, 33.6 million of
2 them decide not to even leave their homes because of this.

3 Thirty-two percent of those people are missing
4 and canceling appointments due to transportation-related
5 difficulties every day. Some of these difficulties include
6 availability, which I was impressed to hear the bigger
7 cities, how much you guys have. Most of our clients are
8 rural Pennsylvania, and when I say "rural," if you don't
9 have four-wheel drive, you are not getting there.

10 We have MediCab, but MediCab is for medical only.
11 That means if someone needs to go to the bank, to the
12 grocery store, to visit a family member, to have any social
13 life whatsoever, they have to pay a private agency to
14 transport them back and forth. Most individuals with a
15 disability, and when I say "most," I'd say over 50 percent
16 are making less than \$25,000 a year. To pay for travel is
17 not feasible. It's not happening for them.

18 Another problem is wait times. Even when you do
19 call MediCab, first of all, you have to have weeks in
20 advance to set this situation up. If they're stuck with
21 another client because their doctor's appointment lasts
22 longer than it is supposed to, not that that ever happens,
23 that next person misses those appointments. And depending
24 on what doctors they are going to, you miss three
25 appointments, the doctor is going to drop you. They no

1 longer have a care partner.

2 Another thing is acute psychosis. This ties in
3 with waiting. When you have a child or adult with any form
4 of intellectual disability, anxiety comes with that. So
5 while we think that waiting for 5 or 10 minutes is just
6 that we need to calm down, play with our phone, whatever
7 the case may be, you take a 22-year-old child who has
8 severe autism and sitting still for 5 minutes is not
9 happening. And it's not because they don't want to, they
10 physically cannot. So then this causes a scene, and
11 unfortunately, most people are -- you know, it's more than
12 they can handle, which makes that child or adult even more
13 uncomfortable. That's not fair to them, and they shouldn't
14 have to go through that. Also, phobias, you know, things
15 of this nature, those trigger that anxiety.

16 A big issue that I find in the areas that I live
17 in, like I said, Bradford County, northeastern
18 Pennsylvania, is that the only form of transportation that
19 these individuals have is MediCab or an agency. I have a
20 small home health agency that is nonmedical. We provide
21 transportation. We have been waiting for 7 months to get
22 approved for Medicaid waivers. We have staff. We have the
23 insurance. We are up to State standards in every, and
24 beyond, because we are very small and I take it very
25 personal. There is no reason that we should be waiting

1 7 months to get Medicaid waivers. There are people out
2 there that we could be helping, but our hands are tied
3 because of waiting for these waivers.

4 Another thing I think that people take for
5 granted is, you know, we have family changing-room tables
6 in public -- in almost every public place, there's a family
7 changing-room table for a toddler. There are a lot of
8 disabled people who are incontinent, and if you are
9 wheelchair bound and incontinent, you cannot go anywhere
10 that you can't go and come back within 2 hours unless you
11 are going to sit in soil. I don't know how any of you, if
12 you process that, you know, if I go to the bathroom and I
13 have to sit in that because I can't be changed, you can't
14 take anybody anywhere. They can't go anywhere that they
15 can't be back -- including hospitals.

16 I have been in a hospital with an 18-year-old who
17 is wheelchair bound that had an incontinent episode. There
18 is not a changing table to, even with two people, put her
19 on a changing table and change her. We had to change her
20 on a table that was about this big in the doctor's office
21 room. Not only is that unsafe, it's very uncomfortable for
22 her and it's not fair. It would not be difficult, I do not
23 think, to put -- the beds don't -- it could be a cot-sized
24 bed, just so that we would be able to change someone and
25 put them back.

1 I have a 58-year-old man who has not left his
2 house in 13 years besides to go to the doctor, because,
3 one, we only have medical cab, and two, there's no way for
4 us to change him if he has to go to the bathroom. So the
5 lack of adult changing tables is super important personally
6 to me, because I see it a lot.

7 Another issue, the rate for medical
8 transportation. Unless you have Medicare or Medicaid which
9 covers this, if you are ambulatory, so if you can walk, the
10 rate is \$25 to \$30 an hour Monday through Friday. Again,
11 these people, the majority, are making \$25,000 a year or
12 less. On the weekend, it's \$30 to \$40. And if you have a
13 wheelchair, these rates are \$45 to \$50 an hour, and on the
14 weekends, \$75 to \$90 an hour.

15 Again, Medicare pays for this. However, there is
16 over 50 percent of Americans with disabilities that are
17 paying this out of pocket. That's a lot of money. And
18 again, I feel like if the waivers, you know, we could get
19 the waivers moving a little bit faster, there are people
20 out there willing to provide these transportations. We
21 just have to be able to legally do it.

22 While the Medical Assistance Transportation
23 Program is in place federally, there are a lot of pros and
24 a lot of cons to this program. The pros are that Medicaid
25 and Medicare pay for them, and they are designed to get you

1 to and from appointments. They are providing handicapped
2 accessibility for the majority of clients.

3 The cons are, they are often way overbooked.
4 They are not picking you up on time for your appointment or
5 after your appointment. There is times when I have clients
6 that we wait at the hospital for 2 hours for MediCab to
7 come pick them up and take them back home. If you have an
8 anxiety problem, that's humungous.

9 You cannot use them again to go to the grocery
10 store, to go to the bank, for out for social activities,
11 and I feel like in the 21th century, we all know how
12 important our mental health is for our physical health. If
13 you don't have a social life and you are in the home, you
14 are literally going to make yourself physically sick, which
15 is going to cause more insurance issues, and Medicare and
16 Medicaid is going to cost you more money for their physical
17 illness than it would have if we would have just found a
18 solution to help them get out into the community.

19 Another issue with the MediCab, I have a friend
20 who they have a MediCab company in New York State, but the
21 Federal laws are still the same. He, when doing his taxes,
22 because he is a medical transport, he is only allowed a
23 23-cents-per-mile transport deduction on his vehicle. You
24 do know that the average for regular mileage is 50 cents.
25 That doesn't add up. This is an issue. That's ridiculous.

1 It doesn't even make any sense to me whatsoever. So I feel
2 like that's something that needs to be addressed, and I'm
3 not sure where it needs to be addressed, but it needs to be
4 addressed.

5 Last but not least is the travel training program
6 by the Office of Vocational Rehab.

7 My sister works for YAP. This is a youth
8 advocacy program for children, and they are dabbling in
9 lots of different parts of not just youths in school but
10 also transitioning them into employment, and then even now
11 they have some adults that they are assisting them with
12 getting jobs and training them so that they can find a job
13 that that person can do, whether it's working on a farm or
14 a grocery store, something to give them that purpose. One
15 of her biggest issues is transportation.

16 I did this course with her by the Vocational
17 Rehab, you know, that helps -- it helps train people and
18 teach them how to use public transportation. It is a
19 phenomenal program. It's amazing what they do. It's not
20 being utilized. They are just not using it as much as they
21 possibly could.

22 I know that this program right now is tying in
23 with Labor and Industry. I feel like there has got to be a
24 way that we could tie this in with the special ed or the
25 transitioning program so that when a child is going through

1 their transitioning program, aging out, they're usually at
2 21 and they're getting seat time for their graduation, and
3 they go through all kinds of training to help them be
4 successful, you know, to be able to live their lives to the
5 best of their ability and the fullest of their ability. If
6 we could tie this program in with that educational program
7 when they're graduating, they would know how to use the
8 public transportation, which would, you know, obviously
9 save us a lot of money in the end.

10 And we don't have a lot of, like I said, there's
11 not a lot of -- we don't have public buses. We don't have
12 rideshare, even in Williamsport. I have a young man I
13 worked with out there a couple of winters that I took care
14 of, and he, we got him into a day program that was an hour
15 and a half away. And he has autism, and traveling in a
16 vehicle at that time, front seat only, and he better be
17 comfortable with whoever was getting in the car with him or
18 he wasn't getting in the car. He hadn't left his house for
19 like a very long time besides with Mom because of security.

20 So we got him into this day program, and he was
21 not -- he couldn't get on the bus, and the day program was
22 like, that's the only means of transportation we have for
23 them, and their home health agency says, well, we can't let
24 our nurses travel with you. Well, I'm an ignorant nurse,
25 and I can go off the clock, and I don't have any problem

1 driving your son to and from a day program if it means
2 you're going to get him to doing something to fulfill his
3 life instead of sitting in an apartment all day long, so I
4 did. And there were days that we went there every single
5 day, and he would walk around and leave, and then we would
6 go other days and he would stay for 5 minutes. After about
7 3 months, he stayed all day long, and that was -- that
8 wouldn't have been feasible. We wouldn't have got to that
9 point if we didn't break the traveling rule. Does that
10 make sense to you?

11 And now he rides a bus to and from a day program
12 every single day. But he needed that little bit of push
13 and that little bit of security to know, to learn what the
14 route is, you know, and those things are important for
15 people that have intellectual disabilities. They need that
16 regular, that routine constantly with the security before
17 they know, I can venture out and do this.

18 So that's all I have to say, and I wish I had
19 more knowledge for you. And I really do appreciate all of
20 you guys letting me be here today. Thank you so much.

21 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Hope, thank
22 you for your testimony today.

23 Next will be Christine Kirlin, Director of the
24 Philadelphia Parking Authority. Christine, you can begin
25 your testimony at any time.

1 MS. KIRLIN: Thank you.

2 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: And the
3 gentleman sitting next to you if you would introduce.

4 MS. KIRLIN: Of course.

5 Good morning, Chairmen and Committee Members. My
6 name is Christine Kirlin. I'm the Director of the Taxicab
7 and Limousine Division for the Philadelphia Parking
8 Authority, and with me today is Deputy Director William
9 Schmid. We want to thank you for inviting us to testify
10 today. We're here to explain the state of the accessible
11 for-hire transportation in Philadelphia.

12 As the Committee Members may be aware, the
13 Philadelphia Parking Authority is the sole regulator of the
14 taxicab, limousine, and transportation network company
15 service in Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania Public Utility
16 Commission regulates the for-hire industry and the
17 remainder of the Commonwealth.

18 So when Act 164 of 2016, in November of 2016,
19 passed by the Legislature, it basically changed the state
20 of the union for the for-hire industry in Philadelphia.
21 That's when transportation network company service was
22 legalized. Transportation network companies are Uber and
23 Lyft. We commonly refer to them as "TNCs."

24 So with the passing of a transportation network
25 company service, that added about 20,000 to 30,000 more

1 vehicles under our jurisdiction in Philadelphia. So today
2 in Philly, taxicabs and TNCs combined are providing roughly
3 around 135,000 trips a day in Philadelphia.

4 Now, Act 164 did provide for certain wheelchair
5 accessible requirements for TNCs, but at the same time,
6 Act 164 lowered some of the existing standards for
7 wheelchair accessible taxis. So those standards are
8 different between taxis and TNCs, so I'll just break them
9 out for you.

10 In 2012, Act 119 authorized the Philadelphia
11 Parking Authority to begin issuing new medallion taxicabs.
12 Prior to Act 119, the statutory cap on the number of
13 medallions permitted to provide medallion service in
14 Philadelphia was capped at 1600. Act 119 allowed us to
15 issue 15 medallions a year every June 1st until we reached a
16 cap of 1750. The first 15 were required to be wheelchair
17 accessible medallions. The medallions had to be attached
18 to an accessible vehicle. But every year thereafter, the
19 Authority has dedicated that every medallion that we issue
20 will be wheelchair accessible service moving forward.

21 So after, you know, we had to promulgate
22 regulations through the IRRC process, and by the time those
23 final form regulations went through, it was in 2014, and in
24 2015, we finally began selling wheelchair accessible
25 medallions.

1 Today, you know, from the time I submitted this
2 written testimony, we have actually added some more
3 wheelchair vehicles. So as of today, right now while we're
4 sitting here, there are 39 wheelchair accessible taxicabs
5 providing service in Philadelphia. By June 1st of this
6 year, we will be authorized to sell 45 more WAV medallions.
7 I say "WAV." That's an acronym for the wheelchair
8 accessible vehicles.

9 But I do want to let you know that the
10 participation and the options of the wheelchair accessible
11 medallions has been sparse by the industry. We have
12 canceled a lot of medallion sales. The industry does not
13 want to expend the costs of purchasing a wheelchair
14 accessible vehicle. It has been tough getting drivers to
15 certify to drive wheelchair accessible vehicles. But as
16 of today, we are now up to 59 wheelchair accessible
17 vehicle-certified taxicab drivers.

18 So in order to obtain a wheelchair accessible
19 driver's certificate, we have a training program that the
20 drivers must attend, 6 hours of in-class training. We go
21 through the safety requirements under the ADA and our own
22 regulations.

23 We also have a physical component of the training
24 program where the drivers are required to learn how to
25 safely secure and transport a person in and out of the

1 vehicle.

2 We provide for a zero-discrimination policy in
3 our regulations, including discrimination against persons
4 with disabilities. Taxicab drivers and wheelchair
5 accessible vehicles are required to give preference to a
6 person in a wheelchair.

7 And as an incentive to try to entice these
8 drivers to become wheelchair accessible certified, we pay a
9 \$50 stipend to every wheelchair accessible driver that
10 successfully completes our training program, and then we
11 also waive the annual renewal fee every time a wheelchair
12 accessible driver renews its certification.

13 The funds for the renewal fee and the stipend is
14 supposed to come from the proceeds of the sales of
15 wheelchair accessible medallions, but we haven't been that
16 successful in selling wheelchair accessible medallions, so
17 the Parking Authority is basically footing the costs of
18 trying to incentivize those drivers.

19 I will say that in 2018, we issued seven
20 citations to drivers related to wheelchair accessible
21 taxicab service, and only one of those citations involved
22 discrimination.

23 So of the 39 wheelchair accessible taxicabs, they
24 are being dispatched by 3 certified wheelchair accessible
25 dispatchers, and that special designation is important.

1 The WAV dispatchers are required to have at least
2 10 percent of all available wheelchair taxicabs in its
3 dispatch, and the reason for that is we have to make sure
4 that if the public calls the dispatcher for a wheelchair
5 vehicle, one is actually available.

6 They are required to provide requested wheelchair
7 service within 20 minutes. If the dispatcher knows that it
8 can't provide the wheelchair service within 20 minutes,
9 they are required to pass the request along to another
10 certified WAV dispatcher. The Parking Authority is part of
11 that communication method, and we do frequent integrity
12 checks to make sure that the dispatchers are following the
13 timelines with regards to providing proper service. During
14 2018, the TLD issued seven citations to the dispatchers for
15 failing to forward a request for wheelchair accessible
16 service.

17 But I will say, and I'm going to stress this to
18 you today, those citations were not a result of a complaint
19 from the riding public. Those citations were a result of
20 our integrity checks. And I will get more into that in a
21 minute, but the Parking Authority does receive generalized
22 complaints from the disabled community regarding either a
23 lack of wheelchair accessible service or the time it takes
24 to receive that accessible service. However, we have not
25 received a single specific complaint that we could

1 investigate regarding the lack or poor wheelchair
2 accessible service.

3 We advocate every opportunity that we can to the
4 riding public that if there's a specific incident where
5 rules aren't being followed, please file it with the
6 Parking Authority. We will investigate it, and we have not
7 received any. So those citations are directly a result of
8 our own integrity checks and not the result of complaints
9 from the riding public.

10 So when the Authority promulgated regulations
11 regarding wheelchair accessible taxi service, we set a
12 higher standard above the ADA guidelines, and that was
13 mainly at the request of the disabled community, that the
14 ADA guidelines are out of date. They don't meet the
15 specifications of newer chairs and things of the like, so
16 we set our standards higher than what was initially
17 required in the ADA.

18 One of the requirements that we heightened was
19 the size of the ramp that is supposed to be in a vehicle.
20 The ADA is 28 to 30 inches, and we made it, our regulations
21 made the ramp wider so that these newer chairs can easily
22 come in and out of the taxicab. But Act 164,
23 unfortunately, cut some of those requirements. They
24 lowered the standards.

25 We used to inspect every taxicab twice a year,

1 including wheelchair accessible taxis, for obvious reasons.
2 I mean, they're transporting the riding public. Act 164
3 cut that and said you are only allowed to inspect taxis,
4 including wheelchair taxis, once every 4 years. So we only
5 see a taxicab once every 4 years.

6 It also cut the age and mileage requirements of a
7 wheelchair accessible taxicab. We used to set the --
8 taxicabs are not allowed to be older than 8 years old.
9 They can't have more than 350,000 cumulative miles on the
10 odometer. We set the standards higher for a wheelchair
11 taxicab.

12 The previous regulation required that taxicabs,
13 wheelchair accessible taxicabs, be newer, less mileage, and
14 come off the road within a couple of years, and it's for
15 obvious reasons. We want people with disabilities that
16 cannot easily get in and out of a car like you and I can to
17 be in the safest vehicle as possible. Act 164 said nope,
18 all wheelchair cars are allowed to be 8 years old and
19 they're allowed to go up to 350,000 miles. So it took away
20 those safety standards that we put in place for accessible
21 vehicles.

22 They also said that the heightened standards that
23 we put in place above the ADA were no longer permitted,
24 that we had to go back down to the outdated ADA standards
25 for all taxicabs.

1 In 2018, wheelchair accessible taxicabs provided
2 a little over 1900 trips a year in Philadelphia. We do
3 monitor the wheelchair accessible taxi trips monthly, but
4 those 1900 wheelchair accessible trips only equate to
5 1 percent of all taxicab trips being provided in
6 Philadelphia.

7 And like I stated, the TLD issued a total of
8 16 citations to taxicab-related accessible service, but I
9 will stress again, those are a result of our own integrity
10 checks and not because we received complaints from the
11 riding public.

12 Now, with regards to TNC WAV service, that's
13 completely different. So when the service was legalized in
14 November of '16, the statute put some requirements in place
15 for TNC WAV service. It stated that by June of 2017, so
16 about 8 months after the service was legalized, there had
17 to be a combination, between both Uber and Lyft, of
18 70 wheelchair accessible vehicles available for service in
19 the city. So it's very ambiguous.

20 Now, it didn't say Uber had to have a certain
21 amount. It didn't say Lyft had to have a certain amount.
22 It just said there had to be a combination of 70. So now
23 you try to fight with the two TNCs as to who is going to
24 carry that 70.

25 But then it also says available "in the city."

1 So what does that mean? We all know how Uber and Lyft
2 operates, right? So you have a driver sign up on the
3 platform with a wheelchair accessible vehicle, and it could
4 choose to work one day and never work again. It doesn't
5 say that they need to be on the platform 24/7 or that
6 X amount of hours a day a wheelchair accessible vehicle
7 needs to be available on the platform. So now we don't
8 know what "available" means. And now you have
9 conversations with the TNCs and you say, well, we met our
10 requirements; we have the minimum number. We can't force
11 these drivers to be on the platform and available for
12 service. So the law itself is very ambiguous.

13 Now, we did our integrity checks on Uber and Lyft
14 and we have seen for ourselves that they do have registered
15 on the platform combined 101 TNC WAV vehicles available in
16 the city. But again, it's so unclear as to what
17 "available" means.

18 The law doesn't require, like I stated, that they
19 be available on the platform for any specific amount of
20 time. The law doesn't require them to provide the service
21 within a certain amount of time from the time of the
22 request, unlike taxis who have to provide it within
23 20 minutes.

24 The PPA is not permitted to certify WAV or any
25 TNC drivers. TNC drivers do not have to go through any

1 certification checks with the Parking Authority. We
2 certify all taxi and limo drivers. They go through a
3 training process and testing before they are permitted to
4 drive. TNC drivers are not required to go through that.

5 Now, the TNCs have reported to us that their
6 drivers do go through third-party training, specifically
7 the WAV drivers, but we have received only one wheelchair
8 accessible TNC complaint ever. So again, the lack of
9 complaints from the public is not helping to determine
10 whether or not there is sufficient WAV service. But that
11 one complaint we did receive regarding WAV TNC service was
12 due to the passenger seated in a wheelchair was not
13 properly secured in the vehicle. So you question whether
14 these TNC drivers are receiving the proper training when
15 they are transporting people with disabilities.

16 We have, as a TLD under Bill Schmid, we have done
17 these integrity checks with TNC WAV services. We have done
18 undercover operations both day and night and on the
19 weekends, and we have found that wheelchair accessible
20 vehicles were available during those tests. So the problem
21 comes from the lack of complaints from the public.

22 Now, I know most people are inclined to go
23 directly through the app and complain to Uber and Lyft and
24 handle it that way. Uber and Lyft do not have to tell the
25 Parking Authority their complaints. We don't know how many

1 complaints they have received. We don't know how they
2 handle them, what the outcomes are. We have very limited
3 auditing power.

4 Act 164 did not give us any -- gave us very basic
5 oversight of the TNCs. We don't know the standards of
6 service, how the WAV drivers are being rated. So like I
7 stated, every opportunity that we get, we are advocating to
8 the public to please keep us informed and file those
9 complaints with us.

10 So we're hoping that we can, sometime in the near
11 future, initiate proposed rulemaking through the IRRC
12 process to possibly fill the gaps that the statute has left
13 concerning TNC service and specifically WAVs. But due to
14 the lack of complaints and the lack of information, we
15 don't know how many WAV trips are being provided by Uber
16 and Lyft. We don't know how many WAV drivers are available
17 on the platform at any given time. We're not allowed. We
18 don't have that audit power.

19 So I think until we ascertain that information
20 and until we start receiving specific incidents from the
21 riding public, I think it's really difficult for at least
22 the Authority to try to figure out whether the demand is
23 meeting the supply or the supply is meeting the demand,
24 because right now, we just don't have that information.

25 Thank you.

1 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Christine,
2 thank you for your testimony. We appreciate that very
3 much.

4 The next testifier will be Alexa Brill. She is
5 the Manager of Social Media for The Arc of Pennsylvania.

6 MS. BRILL: Hello. My name is Alexa Brill. I am
7 the Social Media and Website Manager of The Arc of
8 Pennsylvania. I graduated from Edinboro University of
9 Pennsylvania in 2013 with a degree in sociology.

10 Growing up, my family loved to travel. We would
11 travel various places by car and by airplane. A couple
12 years ago, my sister worked in Orlando. I was asking her
13 multiple times when she was going to come and visit. I
14 said, I'm about to just put myself on the train and come
15 visit you. She said, you can't do that, not in the sense
16 that she didn't believe in me or that she didn't want to
17 see me. It's because she knows that when I travel, I have
18 trouble accessing the restroom. And she explained to me
19 that a train ride to Florida takes about 24 hours, which is
20 a long time to go without using the restroom. And even if
21 I had someone with me, I still wouldn't be able to use the
22 restroom because I have to be lifted up to the toilet. And
23 the thing is, the restrooms in trains and airplanes are
24 very narrow, so there wouldn't be enough room for someone
25 to help me get lifted onto the toilet.

1 And there was another time we were going on
2 vacation to Disney, and this time by air. And
3 unfortunately, when I travel by air, like Matt said, I
4 can't go in my chair. It has to be somewhat taken apart
5 and put in the cargo hold, where we usually disconnected
6 the power. But this time we decided to try and make it
7 easier for them, and we didn't disconnect the power.
8 Because when you disconnect the power, obviously my chair
9 has to be pushed into the cargo hold or lifted, and it's
10 very, very heavy. So we decided to let them use the
11 joystick, but the problem was, when they put it in the
12 cargo hold, they didn't know to press the power button on
13 my chair to turn off the power, and so a piece of luggage
14 fell on top of my joystick.

15 Well, it was in flight, and the chair was going,
16 going, going against the wall of the plane for like the
17 entire 2 hours we were in flight. And when they got it off
18 the cargo hold, we were actually watching, and they were
19 hopping around where they were trying to lift it, because
20 it was hot, but we didn't know that. We were like, what
21 are they doing?

22 And so when I was back in the airport waiting for
23 my chair to come off the elevator, the elevator door opened
24 and it was really smoking, and so we were like, oh my gosh.
25 So we waited for it to cool down, and I got in my chair and

1 I tried to turn it on, and it did turn on. So I'm like,
2 okay. But then I tried to walk with it, and it was very
3 bouncy, very shaky, which is not normal at all. Not only
4 that, but I couldn't make a left turn. It wouldn't turn,
5 no matter how much I turned the joystick.

6 So for the entire trip to Florida, in order to
7 make a left turn, I had to make like three rights, which
8 was very interesting. When you would go in lines for
9 rides, you know some of them are very windy, and these
10 experiences is why people with disabilities have difficulty
11 traveling.

12 Thank you for listening.

13 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Alexa, thank
14 you for your testimony.

15 I'm going to ask each of the testifiers, to the
16 best of your ability, to go around the table, and
17 Representative Hershey, if you could move up, and we'll
18 open this up to Members for questions.

19 And I think that, you know, what we've heard
20 today has been the real-life experiences of each of you.
21 That has really enlightened me, and I'm sure it has
22 enlightened this entire group of Committee Members from
23 both Committees.

24 You know, sometimes we take for granted when
25 we're able to do things, and we see other people who have

1 difficulty, but I don't think that we have a full
2 appreciation of everything that each of you have to go
3 through. And something as simple as was mentioned today,
4 trying to make arrangements to travel, you know, whether a
5 short distance or a long distance; something, again, as
6 simple as going to a doctor's appointment, or something as
7 simple as going to the grocery store, again, that many of
8 us just take for granted.

9 And we certainly appreciate what you have shared
10 with us today, and I think that it will lead this
11 Committee, both Committees, into a lot of further
12 consideration of the issues that you brought forth to us
13 today.

14 And with that, before we go to questions, I'll
15 ask Majority Chair Representative Gene DiGirolamo for
16 comments.

17 Chairman Longietti.

18 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: I certainly
19 want to thank all of the testifiers for enlightening us
20 today, particularly to Alexa for sharing that story. It
21 certainly gives a visual picture of what Matt was talking
22 about earlier and why he has chosen not to try air travel.
23 It really certainly brings that home. So thank you for
24 sharing that.

25 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you.

1 Our first questioner will be Representative
2 Dan Moul.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 Thank you for having this hearing, and most of
5 all, thank you for all the people that testified today.

6 Very eye-opening, to say the very least. It's
7 very difficult for one of us to put ourselves in your
8 position. And so by you coming here and sharing your
9 experiences, it sure does open my eyes, anyway.

10 I think I have a question, and it comes to the
11 Philadelphia Parking Authority. Is that person still here?

12 Oh; okay. You're here down at the end. Thanks.

13 Was there something mandatory -- maybe I missed
14 this or I didn't read fast enough. Was there something
15 mandatory that said if you are going to provide a service
16 with your taxicab company or with your Uber or with your
17 Lyft, that you will have X number on duty, you know, at any
18 given time of the day or week?

19 MS. KIRLIN: There is a requirement codified for
20 taxicabs that dispatchers dispatching wheelchair accessible
21 taxicabs must have at least 10 percent of all wheelchair
22 accessible taxis available in their dispatch so that when
23 someone does call for a wheelchair vehicle, there is one
24 available. The law does not require TNCs to have
25 wheelchair accessible vehicles available for any certain

1 period of time on the platform.

2 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: That's not something that
3 the Authority could require as a regulation within the city
4 limits, is it?

5 MS. KIRLIN: That's what we're looking at, to
6 promulgate regulations to try to fill those gaps.

7 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: Okay. Good. Thank you.

8 MS. KIRLIN: Yeah.

9 REPRESENTATIVE MOUL: As someone who knows a
10 little bit about airplanes, I think it's extremely
11 despicable, as readily and easily as the seats are to
12 remove, and believe me, I have removed them hundreds and
13 hundreds of times, that they would not make an
14 accommodation to just pop out a couple of seats for them
15 down in the cargo hold and allow you to board first, back
16 your chair in, and tie it down with a strap hooked to the
17 same seat rail as the seat just came out of, and the same
18 goes for trains. I'm not very familiar with trains, but
19 I'm sure those seats move in and out easily.

20 I don't know that we can do anything about planes
21 here because they are Federal, but I can sure scream this
22 at my Congressman and my Senator. And I think it's a
23 really good idea that we start making these major airlines
24 at least go that far to accommodate you so that you don't
25 have to watch your wheelchair fall off a conveyor belt or

1 have somebody that doesn't know how to operate it not turn
2 off the electricity in your wheelchair and it sits in the
3 cargo hold and runs until it either burns up or the battery
4 is totally dead. I just think it's despicable that they
5 don't make that accommodation.

6 Thank you for being here. Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you,
9 Representative.

10 Representative Toohil.

11 REPRESENTATIVE TOOHL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 And thank you to all of the Chairmen for
13 convening this joint group of all of these committees. I
14 think it's so important.

15 And I just wanted to say, Alexa Brill, wow. Your
16 testimony is truly inspirational. I think if I could speak
17 on behalf of all of my colleagues here, your advocacy is
18 going to go far because your personal story is going to
19 stick with me, I think forever. It was extremely moving.
20 It's extremely moving to see you as a successful career
21 woman, and you should be able to travel and should not be
22 hindered by this.

23 And luckily we have an airplane expert with us,
24 because maybe there's more that we can do even as a State
25 Legislature to craft a joint letter, a memorandum, a

1 request to the FAA. I think bipartisan, maybe we can move
2 forward with something like that. And just, we can refer
3 to your testimony and say, this is absolutely unacceptable.

4 So thank you for coming, and it's a pleasure and
5 a privilege for all of us to be here and meet you today.

6 MS. BRILL: Thank you.

7 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you,
8 Representative.

9 Representative Mizgorski.

10 REPRESENTATIVE MIZGORSKI: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman.

12 I want to thank you for coming in today and sort
13 of reminding me of my past. My late mother was a
14 double-leg amputee and spent time in a wheelchair, and so I
15 am very aware of every curb cut; the width of, you know, a
16 doorway; whether a restroom is truly accessible, which they
17 are not -- that awareness never leaves; and being very
18 infuriated when I see a parking space utilized by someone
19 that should not be using it.

20 But one of the things I do remember is every time
21 we wanted to go out on some kind of outing, and at the
22 time, my children were small, we were planning, you know,
23 when I would pick up my mother, how I would get her in my
24 van, how we would get in, helping her to the restroom if
25 she would need changing. And at that time, there just

1 weren't any adult changing stations. So any kind of event
2 we planned, there was a lot of time spent ahead of time
3 planning and then actually doing it.

4 I guess in my mother's favor, she was afraid to
5 fly prior to being in a wheelchair, so afterwards, she had
6 no desire, you know, either. So we didn't have to deal
7 with that issue.

8 But is that in the ADA regulations for, you know,
9 adult changing stations, or is there any room for that
10 legislatively within the State? If anybody knows.

11 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: I do not
12 know. I'll call on you. You can answer that.

13 MS. LANDIS: I know.

14 Hi. I'm Sherri Landis. I'm the Executive
15 Director of The Arc of Pennsylvania.

16 I believe Representative Dan Miller has put in
17 legislation in the past requiring adult changing stations.
18 I'm not sure if he reintroduced it this session.

19 REPRESENTATIVE MIZGORSKI: Okay.

20 MS. LANDIS: That is something that he has
21 advocated in the past.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MIZGORSKI: Oh; we'll speak with
23 him.

24 And then the other question, you were saying
25 about Uber and Lyft, if they're getting complaints, you

1 don't know about it, and you were referring to Act 164.
2 And I don't know, is there something we could do that would
3 require them to, you know, share that information with you
4 or with some other agency within the State?

5 MS. KIRLIN: Yes. I mean, this is something,
6 this is a topic that the Parking Authority is talking about
7 frequently, is requiring Uber and Lyft to provide more
8 basic data by law.

9 So complaints is a big issue. We want to make
10 sure that they are being handled properly. And even basic
11 trip data to help us ascertain, you know, and understand
12 the information that we need in order to make sure that
13 there is proper service.

14 So this is something that we are currently
15 advocating for, is to require TNCs under the law to provide
16 very basic data to us, including complaints.

17 REPRESENTATIVE MIZGORSKI: Right, and thank you.

18 And thank you for coming today, because I know it
19 took a lot of planning and effort to get here.

20 Thank you.

21 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you,
22 Representative.

23 Chairman Longietti.

24 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Thank you,
25 Chairman.

1 I want to explore a little bit further the
2 complaint issue. And it sounded like from your testimony
3 that you suspect that one of the reasons you don't get the
4 complaints is they complain directly to Uber or Lyft or the
5 taxicab company. Is that the primary reason why you think,
6 or are there other reasons why people are not contacting
7 PPA?

8 MR. SCHMID: I believe when -- I handle all the
9 complaints. I believe without a doubt that Uber and Lyft
10 address the complaints when they are made directly, but I
11 don't know how deep that they go, and I'll just explain
12 that.

13 One of the complaints that we do see often is
14 complaints about circuitous routes and cancellation fees.
15 It's a big deal, cancellation fees. I suspect that there
16 are drivers that are out there who accept a trip in order
17 to keep their ratings at a particular level and then kick
18 the trip out, hoping to get a better trip or a trip closer
19 to them, you know, maybe at one of the entertainment
20 venues.

21 And I see time and time and time again, I had a
22 trip, a cancellation fee: I'm not paying the \$5; I'm not
23 paying the \$5; I'm not paying the \$5, and those are
24 simultaneously investigated by us. So by the time we go
25 back and contact the person who filed the complaint, they

1 tell me, they already refunded me; or, I haven't heard
2 back. And then I'll send it to my contact and they settle
3 it.

4 I don't know if Bill Schmid has been doing this
5 time and time and time again to keep that \$5. If I knew
6 who the people were, just like I know on the taxi and the
7 limousine side, I know who the bad actors are, I can keep
8 tabs on them and detect a trend. I can't do that without
9 the data, and that's just one small thing that I feel
10 strongly is happening.

11 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Okay.

12 So, yeah, I understand the importance of being
13 able to audit.

14 A thought. You know, I know when I have used
15 Uber, at the end of the ride there's a screen that says,
16 rate your driver.

17 MR. SCHMID: Yeah.

18 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Why can't
19 that screen say, complaints, call this number?

20 MR. SCHMID: There is a button that they can get
21 to, but it's on the app. It's on the platform, but it's
22 buried. It's not one of the first things that you would
23 see. You have to go looking for it.

24 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Mmm. Yeah.
25 It seems to me that that, technologically speaking, that

1 ought to be something that---

2 MR. SCHMID: Yeah.

3 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: ---they
4 could do. And I suppose a traditional taxicab company
5 could have some kind of sticker---

6 MR. SCHMID: Yes.

7 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: ---that
8 says, complaints, call this number. Just a thought.

9 MR. SCHMID: It's on the receipt, too.

10 MINORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Okay.

11 MR. SCHMID: They get a receipt, and it's in
12 their hand, our number.

13 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you,
14 Chairman.

15 Representative Madden.

16 ACTING MINORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN MADDEN:
17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 And thank you to everyone for coming and sharing
19 your stories with us and the issues that people with
20 physical disabilities face, the challenges they face every
21 day. It certainly is enlightening and makes all of us
22 think about ways in which we can help.

23 And Matt, I would probably disagree with you that
24 you are a half glass full type of person. I think your
25 sense of humor and the fact that you are here and you are

1 advocating to help other people is admirable, and I think
2 it's pretty optimistic.

3 Alexa, thank you for sharing your story. Thank
4 you for your perseverance. Thank you for your advocacy.
5 I'm so sorry what happened to you on your trip to Disney.
6 I would think that that problem could be solved by having
7 bins for wheelchairs, you know, that are kind of
8 indestructible, where you would pick up the wheelchair with
9 however many people it takes, you put it in those bins and
10 you put a lid on it, and it's tied down. That seems like a
11 pretty easy solution to me.

12 MS. BRILL: Mm-hmm.

13 ACTING MINORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN MADDEN:
14 But perhaps we'll all have conversations, and I would be
15 very interested in a joint letter with Congress to make
16 some of these recommendations.

17 And just on a personal note, Alexa, I see you are
18 the Manager of Social Media.

19 MS. BRILL: Yeah.

20 ACTING MINORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN MADDEN:
21 I sent you a friend request.

22 MS. BRILL: Okay.

23 ACTING MINORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN MADDEN:
24 So when you get this strange friend request, it's me.

25 MS. BRILL: Yeah. Okay.

1 ACTING MINORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN MADDEN:

2 And we have a common friend and a dear friend of mine,
3 Lucille Piggott-Prawl.

4 MS. BRILL: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

5 ACTING MINORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN MADDEN:
6 We have that friend in common.

7 MS. BRILL: Yeah.

8 ACTING MINORITY HUMAN SERVICES CHAIRMAN MADDEN:
9 So I hope you'll accept my friend request, and thank you.

10 MS. BRILL: Yeah.

11 MAJORITY TOURISM CHAIRMAN MILLARD: Thank you,
12 Representative.

13 Do any other Members have questions?

14 On behalf of both committees and all the
15 Chairmen, we want to thank each of our testifiers for
16 providing the testimony and the insight that you have given
17 us today. And it appears to me that we do have some work
18 ahead of us, and hopefully we'll get to that in a very
19 expeditious manner.

20 Again, thank you. That concludes this hearing.

21

22 (At 10:20 a.m. the joint public hearing
23 adjourned.)

1 I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings
2 are a true and accurate transcription produced from audio
3 on the said proceedings and that this is a correct
4 transcript of the same.

5
6
7 *Debra B. Miller*

8 Debra B. Miller

9 Transcriptionist

10 dbmreporting@msn.com