



NYETA Questions NYC's Commitment to All Immigrants

(December 7, 2016) Yesterday, the NYC Council—with the full throated support of Speaker Mark-Viverito—passed a resolution that reaffirmed New York as a sanctuary city for immigrants who have come here:

“Anti-immigration rhetoric from the president-elect has many in the city’s immigrant communities fearful,” the speaker said at a press conference before the Council’s stated meeting today. “This resolution reaffirms that our policies and laws we’ve implemented in this city will continue and we will continue to support and provide sanctuary for our immigrant communities.” (<http://observer.com/2016/12/council-votes-to-keep-nyc-a-sanctuary-city/>)

New Yorkers for Equal Transportation Access (NYETA) has no beef with this move, but we do have a problem with the council’s so-called commitment to immigrants. NYETA represents over 6,000 immigrant taxi medallion owners whose investments and future have been put a great risk because the city’s immigrant supporting rhetoric doesn’t seem to apply to them.

The Taxi & Limousine Commission is charged with the enhancement of public safety and regulation for a taxi industry that has provided tens of thousands of immigrants a real chance for success, and a path to middle class life. The foundation for this success has historically been the taxi medallion.

Now, however, that success is being threatened because of NYC’s failure to protect the industry that it has created—and the rules that are its foundation. These rules were promulgated to insure passenger safety and regulated competition that created a level playing field for taxi owners and operators. The failure to enforce the rules fairly is threatening the investments of the over 6,000 New York City’s medallion owners—predominately immigrants, women, and other minorities.

These hard working small business owners have been the face of the industry for over 80 years. Medallion ownership is an investment for the public’s benefit. The investment has enabled owners to put their kids through college, buy their own homes, and has given them their own 401-K retirement nest egg.

What about supporting these successful immigrants? While we have no quarrel with aiding those immigrants who are struggling on the lower rungs of the economic ladder, how can the city council stand by and allow the tens of millions of immigrant invested capital to be squandered

because the TLC, the city council, and the mayor himself, will not stand up for the rights of these immigrant entrepreneurs?

As NYETA spokesperson Brad Gerstman says: *“Too often the success of immigrant entrepreneurs is disregarded-as it has been at Willets Point, the Bronx Terminal Market and the failure of the council to pass the Small Business Survival Act. The unwillingness of the council to stand up for immigrant medallion owners fits into this feckless tradition. We call on CM Menchaca who chairs the Immigration Committee to call a hearing to examine ways that the city can promote and protect the hard earned investments of the immigrant medallion owners”*

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