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MICAH Z. KELLNER  
65<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

March 17, 2010

David Yassky  
Chairman  
NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission  
40 Rector Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10006

Dear Chairman Yassky:

I am writing to congratulate you on your well-deserved appointment as Chair of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, and to urge you to take the next great step towards developing a taxi fleet that is accessible to all New Yorkers.

The TLC has begun to acknowledge the importance of ensuring that our city's taxis are accessible to those with visual, hearing, or mobility impairments, most notably with its Central Dispatch pilot program and the December 2009 release of its Taxi of Tomorrow Request for Proposals. However, the Commission has not yet fully embraced the principle of equal access for all. While the Central Dispatch program showed some promise as a stopgap measure, it was plagued with operational problems and, ultimately, was no substitute for a fully-accessible taxi fleet. The Taxi of Tomorrow RFP is more forward-thinking, but it falls short of a firm commitment to full accessibility according to the specifications of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and is not specific enough in requiring accommodations for passengers who are hearing- or visually-impaired.

Now is the time for the TLC to move ahead into a fully-accessible future. A 100% accessible taxi fleet would uphold the principle of equal access, and it would generate additional business for drivers. Additionally, it would help facilitate major reforms to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Access-a-Ride program, allowing any paratransit rider to use debit cards in yellow and black cabs. I have advocated for this reform, which would save taxpayers \$50 million a year by reducing the cost of paratransit service, and the MTA has promised to begin a pilot program to this end. However, it would be appropriate for the TLC to take charge of this pilot project, with an ultimate goal of integrating the new, more cost-effective and user-friendly paratransit model with a fully accessible taxi fleet.

It has become increasingly clear what such a fleet would look like. I sponsor a bill with State Senator Tom Duane (A.7842/S.4861) to mandate that after June 30, 2011, taxi owners may

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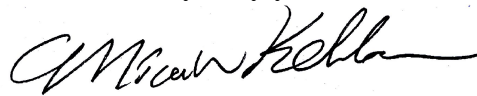
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put only accessible taxicabs into service when replacing vehicles that have reached their TLC-mandated retirement age. This legislation clearly defines accessibility and is based upon the insights and experiences of riders with disabilities, who are best-positioned to explain what truly constitutes an accessible vehicle.

Your predecessor, Chairman Daus, has said that the TLC Chair should listen to people in the disabilities community, and pursue a path towards a 100% accessible taxi fleet. There is no reason to delay—there are accessible vehicles that have proven themselves as NYC taxis; this is a goal that can be achieved now. I urge you to take this opportunity to make equal access to taxicabs a part of your legacy at the TLC by implementing rules that mandate a 100% accessible taxi fleet.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Micah Z. Kellner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Micah Z. Kellner  
Assembly Member

MZK/phc