

**AUTOMOTIVE, PETROLEUM, CYLINDER AND BOTTLED  
GAS, CHEMICAL DRIVERS, HELPERS AND ALLIED WORKERS  
AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYEES LOCAL UNION 922**

2120 BLADENSBURG ROAD, N.E. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20018

AFFILIATED WITH: INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS • TEAMSTERS JOINT COUNCIL NO. 55

PHONE: 202-526-9250 • FAX: 202-526-9253



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November 13, 2013

Mayor Vincent Gray  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 316  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mayor Gray:

We are outraged that the D.C. Taxicab Commission is illegally stifling free speech by requiring some members of the public to submit written testimony in advance before being allowed to exercise their right to speak during the public comment period. This practice is not only contrary to city policy, it is illegal.

Further, the commission's explanation that it requires written testimony in advance because it is "difficult for us to understand" them is abhorrent, discriminatory and unlawful, especially in an international city such as Washington, D.C., where so many residents hail from all over the world.

The commission's illegal practice is applied in a shockingly discriminatory manner. At today's meeting, a driver rose to speak when his name was called, yet he was denied his right because his written testimony had not been submitted in advance. However, another driver was granted permission to speak because he had testified before the board in the past and commissioners said they could understand his accent. I hope you are as dismayed and offended as I was that this occurred at a public meeting of a government body in Washington, D.C. in the year 2013.

On behalf of the 2,000 members of the Washington, D.C. Taxi Operators Association and thousands of other taxi drivers in the city, I call on you to immediately direct the Taxicab Commission to end this illegal, discriminatory practice so that anyone who wishes to speak may do so, regardless of accent. We also demand a public apology to the drivers who were denied their right to speak and who were subject to the commission's offensive actions.

I will be contacting the D.C. Commission on Human Rights about today's shameful meeting of the D.C. Taxicab Commission.

I also wish to point out that this latest incident of discrimination under your administration follows an incident last week in which your spokesmen insulted every driver in the city with his offensive remark that "we barely have a third-world taxicab system in this city." That statement demeaned the more than 6,000 taxicab drivers in the District, many of whom are from developing countries in Africa and the Middle East.

Drivers have long believed that their voices did not count to the Mayor's Office, contributing to their frustration and anger. Those concerns are justified, given what has transpired over the last week.

Sincerely,



Ferline Buie

President, Teamsters Local 922

International Vice President, International Brotherhood of Teamsters