

October 2024

Black to the Future

As September passes into the rearview mirror, I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge an important anniversary. On September 18, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of a non-profit that supports over 100,000 drivers and 500 bases in New York City and State: The Black Car Fund.

Almost everyone in the for-hire industry knows about the Fund or has heard of it, but it's easy to forget that when it launched back in 1999 the idea of a state-mandated Workers' Compensation fund for drivers was new. Even though it seems like a no-brainer, prior to that there was virtually no reliable compensation for black car drivers injured on the job. As a regulator whose primary concerns are the safety of passengers, drivers, and the health of the overall industry, it's hard to overstate what an important partner BCF is when it comes to those shared goals.

Over the last 25 years, BCF has blossomed into an institution that now offers an umbrella of services and protections for drivers, including dental insurance, vision coverage, and a Wellness Program with everything from physical and mental health awareness training to free cancer screenings. The BCF's signature Defensive Driving Course, which pays drivers \$300 to attend, makes our city and state safer and my mission that much easier.

We take the BCF for granted today, but if this summer taught us anything, it's that protections for drivers matter more than ever. We saw Uber and Lyft engage in a cynical campaign of booting drivers off their apps to juice utilization rates and circumvent TLC's minimum pay rules. This was after they recklessly onboarded new drivers for months, driving down utilization rates, only to turn around and then deny access to tens of thousands of drivers—as if their services and livelihoods were disposable.

This wasn't the first time we've seen lockouts, but I want it to be the last. I mentioned in my July column that we're working on amendments designed to strengthen our minimum pay rules and deter future restrictions; now I'm happy to share that we will soon be introducing them. When those rule proposals drop, I expect a robust public discussion. As always, I am hopeful that, at the end of the rulemaking period, we can provide more security and pay protections for drivers and increase stability for the industry—all of which improves safety for passengers and drivers.

See you out there,

David Do
Commissioner, NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission