GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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OFFICE OF THE D.C. TAXICAB COMMISSION
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PANEL ON INDUSTRY
PUBLIC HEARING
+ + + + +
THURSDAY
JULY 16, 2015

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The Panel met at 2235 Shannon Place, S.E., Washington, D.C., at 11:00 a.m., Stanley W. Tapscott, Chairperson, presiding.

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT:

STANLEY W. TAPSCOTT, Chairperson
CHARLES LINDSAY, Panel Member
ANTHONY MUHAMMAD, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT:

JACQUES P. LERNER, ESQ., General Counsel

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(11:13 a.m.)

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: First, I would like to request to turn your cell phones off. They may be disruptive, so we'll turn all these cell phones off. And I really would appreciate it.

First, we'd like to take a moment of silence.

(Moment of silence)

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Thank you. Good morning. My name is Commissioner Stanley Tapscott. I am the Chairman of the DC Taxicab Commission Panel on Industry. With me today we have other members of the Panel. Commissioners Mr. Muhammad and Ms. Smalls probably will be here later. And Mr. Charles Lindsay.

The time is now 11:15. Sorry about the delay. We had some things that we had to clear up before the meeting was open.

We are in the Public Hearing Room of the D.C. Taxicab Commission. 2235 Shannon Place,

Southeast.

Earlier this year, the Commission directed the Panel to investigate the current limit on taxicab vehicle license, commonly referred to as the H-tags moratorium, and to publish a written report with recommendation to the full Commission concerning the moratorium.

To be clear, an H-tag is actually a license provided by the Department of Motor Vehicle when the Commission issues a vehicle license under its own rule. The Panel was directed to thoroughly evaluate all issues concerning the moratorium, which dates from January 1, 2006 to the present.

To do this, the Panel decided to gather both written and oral comments from the industry. With written comments received first. The written comments were provided through an H-tag information forum which was made available from May 2nd through June 1. The forum allows stakeholders to provide basic information about their view on the moratorium and whether it

should be lifted and if so, why.

The Panel received over 1,100 forms from the drivers and companies. And has now had an opportunity to review the forms in order to get an accurate sense of stakeholders view in preparation for the public hearing.

Today's public hearing is an opportunity for the Panel to receive oral testimony on whether the Commission should lift the moratorium on vehicle license. And if so, whether there should be any limit or conditions placed on new license.

The Panel expects to hear testimony to DCTC license and market conditions affecting the supply and use of the taxicabs in the District. We are interested in receiving special comments. Particularly on the likely impact of changing to the number of taxi's licensed and typed of vehicles used. And wheelchair accessible vehicles.

The Panel will take all testimony into consideration. But we ask all speakers to please

be specific in their comments today.

We encourage speakers to avoid repeating what has already been said many times at the Commission's monthly meeting and in other regular forum. The Panel is well aware of the common argument for and against the new vehicles license.

So please try to focus on specific items, specific issues, and share with us your most original insight that others have not already provided.

This public hearing is the first of two that will be held by the Panel. The second hearing is scheduled for July the 30th from 11:00 to 3:00 p.m.

The format will be the same as stated in the public notice. Registered speakers will have three minutes to speak. And non-registered speakers will have two minutes to speak.

As you can see by the turnout today, we have many people who have registered to speak. Therefore we will strictly adhere to the format,

I can't speak today, aforementioned time limit. We ask that you respect the timeframe so that all in attendance will have the opportunity to testify.

You are free to stay or leave after you testify. However, because of the capacity of this room is 91 occupancy, we ask that you be considerate and leave so that others wish to testify, that are standing in the lobby of this facility, can enter this hearing room.

We will take a ten minute break, I'm going to change that, from a ten minute to five minute break. And that will give us more time to hear other people. A five-minute recess every hour, which we will announce shortly after we end.

Finally, the record for this hearing will be open through January the 31st. I'm sorry, July 31st.

If you are unable to testify today but would like your testimony to be part of the public record, please email it to poi@dc.gov no

later than July 31, 2015. Thank you.

Thank you. We will now call the first five speakers, and operators, to the forum.

(Off record comments)

MR. LINDSAY: Good morning. My name is Charles Lindsay. I'm a member of the Panel of Industry. I'm also a staff member here at DC Taxi.

So I'll be calling the names. I apologize if I can't pronounce your name, I will spell it. But if that's you, please come. We are going to time everyone. You have three minutes to speak. And we're going to move in that fashion. We have a lot of people speaking, so we want to get to as many as we possibly can. All right. So with that, let's get started.

First is, A-J-E-C-O-L-E, A-J-E-D-A. Is Mister, A-J-E-C-O-L-E, A-J-E-D-A, here? No?

Youseef Baldi. Youseef, please, if you would come to the front.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Take a seat.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. Samon, S-A-M-O-N,

A-Y-E-A-T-U-W-A-C-H-E-W. Okay.

Reshid, A-B-D-U-L-H-A-D-I. Please come, if that's you, please come to the front.

Kehinde, A-D-E-R-O-J-U. Okay.

Mister, P-R-E-M, C-H-O-H-D-A. Okay.

A-N-D-A-R, G-A-C-H-E-W, W-O-L-D-E. Okay.

F-E-K-A-D-E, T-E-S-H-O-M-E. If that's you, please come to the front.

T-E-S-F-A-Y-E, A-B-A-T-E. Okay. Tesfaye, Abate.

Ewnetu Gemechu. E-W-N-E-T-U, G-E-M-E-C-H-U.

MR. GEMECHU: Yes, sir.

MR. LINDSAY: All right. Tilahun Kassa. T-I-L-A-H-U-N, K-A-S-S-A.

Adel Becher. A-D-E-L, B-E-C-H-E-R.

Muhammad Rohman. Muhammad Rohman, R-O-H-M-A-N.

Slim Baldi. Slim Baldi.

Mohamed Tarig. Mohamed Tarig, T-A-R-I-G. M-O-H-A-M-E-D, T-A-R-I-G. No?

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Is that you?

MR. LINDSAY: Binku Jimma. B-I-N-K-U, J-I-M-M-A.

Abed Temesgen. A-B-E-D, T-E-M-E-S-G-E-N.

Shefer Mengesha. S-H-E-F-E-R, M-E-N-G-E-S-H-A.

Sajid Sohail. S-A-J-I-D, S-O-H-A-I-L.

Tolla Hailu. T-O-L-L-A, H-A-I-L-U.

Alali Nabil.

PARTICIPANT: Sound. Sound.

MR. LINDSAY: Say it again?

PARTICIPANT: The sound. The sound.

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, I'm sorry? Can you hear me?

PARTICIPANT: No, no. No. The sound.

MR. LINDSAY: There we go. Can you hear me now? No. There we go. Sorry. Okay.

Alali Nabil. A-L-A-L-N-I -- A-L-A-L-I, N-A-B-I-L.

Bhatti Shahid. B-H-A-T-T-I, S-H-A-H-I-D.

Ayenew Mitiku. A-Y-E-N-E-W, M-I-T-I-K-U.

Test Hailemarim. Hailemarim. T-E-S, H-A-I-L-E-M-A-R-I-M.

Omisore, A-B-I-O-L-A.

T-S-E-G-A-Y-E, W-E-H-A-D-E.

Kidane Theodros. K-I-D-A-N-E, T-H-E-O-D-R-O-S.

Hare Amber. H-A-R-E, A-M-B-E-R. Okay.

Yonas Getachew. Y-O-N-A-S, G-E-T-A-C-H-E-W. Okay.

That's all five. All righty, so each person has three minutes, starting with the gentleman here to my right. Introduce yourself, spell your name. So, this is being recorded. If you don't mind. All right.

MR. ABDULHADI: Okay.

MR. LINDSAY: And I will not start until you spell your name. So that gives you another 30 seconds.

MR. ABDULHADI: Okay. My last name is

Abdulhadi and --

MR. LINDSAY: The mic is down there, sir. Thank you.

MR. ABDULHADI: My last name is Abdulhadi, A-B-D-U-L-H-A-D-I. And first name Reshid, R-E-S-H-I-D.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. You may begin.

MR. ABDULHADI: Okay. I got six points just to put like, why we need H-tags.

The first thing is the quality of cars. Which is, if DCTC gave us H-tags for everybody, we will have a lot of opportunity to get new cars on the street.

Like everybody just like to buy hybrid cars. And that prevents like pollution's, everything. And also it's about this quality.

This time on Washington, D.C. is cars are moving, like taxis are very old cars. And if we got H-tags, new drivers, they going to buy a brand new cars which is hybrid cars. And this is my first point.

The second one is, it will be a lot of

tax payers if we have -- the D.C. Taxicab hiring the drivers. There will be a lot of tax payers.

And my third point also, most of the taxi drivers, like part times, the shifts are not fulfilled. You know, all of like -- if you say like if we have 12,000 taxicabs, all of them they are not working on the same time. All have working -- some of them work night. And there is different shifts.

And if DCTC give H-tags, the shifts will be fulfilled. And there is not any lack of taxis on the streets.

And if there is a lot of taxis on the streets, customers they get easily taxis because they are not waiting, signing into Uber and calling for Uber.

Why they are calling for Uber, they got taxicabs on the street. They don't need to call Uber's no more.

And my fifth point is, to get applications. Applications is a new technology this time. This technology is beyond for

everybody to get like access. Every customer they get access by logging, this time younger generations, they are not waiting taxis on the street. Most of them they log into their cell phone and waiting --

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir. I hate to cut you off, but we have to move to the speaker. Okay?

MR. ABDULHADI: Okay.

MR. LINDSAY: You were pretty good, but if you have written testimony, you guys can submit it to us. To the address, 2235 Shannon Place. And the record is open until July 31st, okay. Thank you very much.

So we'd like to move to the next speaker. Please pronounce your name, sir.

MR. TESHOME: My name is Fekade Teshome. F-E-K-A-D-E, T-E-S-H-O-M-E. I've been driving taxicab for over 20 years.

Due to personal problems I've surrendered my tag before the Commission made decisions to stop giving out new tag. Now I'm

renting. And I would like to ask the committee to give me back my tag for the following reasons.

As the number of new drivers is going up, rental cabs are becoming very scarce. If I lose my rental cab for any reason, I'm going to be jobless. This creates a huge job insecurity on me.

Taking into consideration the effort of Uber on my job, working eight hours a day is not enough. I have to work long hours to make a living and to pay outrageous rental price.

I'm compelled to spend less and less time with my family. Plus my health condition is deteriorating due to lack of adequate rest.

After all, is that what I deserve? After serving the city and the public for over 20 years?

These days it's obvious that the taxicab industry is improving and growing. The public is in hybrid or low-fuel consuming vehicles state of mind.

Let me play my part for the expansion

of modern fleet and let me contribute my share to meet the standards of EPS Clean Air Act. This will help only if I get back my tag.

Finally, I would like to ask the Committee to consider my statements and make a favorable decision. Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Next speaker please.

MR. GEMECHU: My last name is, G-E-M-E-C-H-U. The first name is, E-W-N-E-T-U. Thank you officers for this chance.

I represent the group of 2009. We took taxi training offered by UDC in 2009. Paying $375 U.S. dollars.

Usually in procedure -- we took the first test and got our yellow card. Usually, and procedurally, D.C. Taxi Commission used to give the second test, or popularly known as computers test, in two or three weeks.

But the Commission failed to do so and put us on suspense from 2009 up to November 9, 2013. On November 9, 2013 we paid $100 U.S.

dollars and took the test.

And to get the license, we were ordered by the Commission, again, to visit some five, six D.C. Government agencies affecting payments. We did that and got the license.

After that we could not buy our vehicle and get H-tag. That's an enigma to use. And we are still on the second suspense.

We have some, three points on D.C. website, as to the concerns. One is whether there is market or not. The second is wheelchair accessible van. And the third is hybrid cars.

As to the market, the success of Uber, in a very short period of time, is lasting testimony.

As to wheelchair accessible vans, from the website, we have got that. Eighty-six have been added to the corps of D.C. taxi.

And of their own will, drivers are inclining to have fuel hybrid cars. That is the order of the day now. So D.C. Taxi Commission's concerns are just met.

So we ask or pray to Panel members, to consider that we are on suspense from 2009 to present. There are no concerns.

The market is there, wheelchair accessible vans are already made, hybrid cars are the order of the day. With respect to taxicab owners.

So we pray again and again. And it will remain, really, an enigma to us why we are on suspense from 2009 up to now, affecting different payments.

So if there are no worries and if the worry of Taxi Commission is already made, we are just -- will be entitled with the political contribution of you officials. Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir.

MR. GEMECHU: I have my documents, can I --

MR. LINDSAY: Sure, we can take those.

MR. GEMECHU: Thanks.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir. I appreciate it. Next speaker please.

MR. GETACHEW: Hi, my name is Yonas Getachew. Y-O-N-A-S, G-E-T-A-C-H-E-W.

Just like my colleague, Fekade, mentioned, I surrender my tag way before the D.C. Taxi Commission pass a new law regarding not giving back the tag that we returned.

I returned my tag because of family health problem. And I couldn't get it back when I needed it.

But the problem is, even though we are on a public service, nobody seems to care about us. I mean who cares about the little guy. The taxicab driver.

From the Taxi Commission, all the police, the inspectors. Everybody here. The cab drivers.

Why? We serving the public. And yet, nobody seems to care about us. I mean we have a family to support.

I mean, if we rent the car, most of the rental cars are really run down. I mean been on the street for a long time.

So out of the month, the whole week, we spent in the garage to get a fixed our car. If we don't get it fixed, we don't get a cab to rent it to make a living.

We all have a family to support. But the D.C. Taxi Commission's really, every time they have a new law and every time we not really aware of.

I mean, how are we supposed to know that once we return, once we surrender our H-tag, we don't get it back. Believe me, if you ask anybody if they knew they wouldn't get it back, they would keep it. They would just keep paying the insurance because it's not worth giving it back.

And yet all of a sudden you're not giving our H-tags. How are we supposed to serve, how are we supposed to support our family. I have a 3 year-old-son. If my wife is out of her job we cannot support our family with my income. Because we're actually paying $800 a month for a taxi. With actually we spent the whole week

trying to get it fixed, our cab, to run.

I hope you have the heart and really the wisdom, to give us back our H-tag so we could support and have a healthy and really productive public service. I think you for your time.

MR. LINDSAY: Our General Counsel, Jacques Lerner.

MR. LERNER: Just from, sir, did you mean that you have to wait while the rental car is being repaired?

MR. GETACHEW: You see, most of the rental cars --

MR. LERNER: I just want to know, make sure I understand.

MR. GETACHEW: Yes.

MR. LERNER: Okay.

MR. GETACHEW: Because if you give it back --

MR. LERNER: Right.

MR. GETACHEW: -- you don't get it back.

MR. LERNER: Well right, because

you're assigned to a specific --

MR. GETACHEW: Yes.

MR. LERNER: Thank you. Okay, thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Yes, sir.

MR. MAHMOOD: My name is Tariq Mahmood. Last name is, M-A-H-M-O-O-D. The first name is Tariq, T-A-R-I-Q.

I'm working to 15 years in Washington, D.C. And I have a serious accident. I'm in like a -- involved, the tree fell down and ambulance came to the accident after 15 minutes. That's why I'm not working like one years. That's why I returned the tag back.

I just request for the peoples, give me my tag back. I feed my family. Thank you, very much.

MR. LINDSAY: Yes, the speakers are done. Please, you can excuse yourself.

And, again, I ask, we can't require you to leave, however, we just ask you to be considerate and allow others to come in because

there are a lot of folk that want to come in. And as you guys saw earlier, when I called some names, as some folks stated, they are outside. We like folk to come inside, okay.

Finished your testimony? Thank you. Okay. So I'm going to continue. Dawit Berhanesdlassia --

(Off record comment)

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, you want me to start from the top again? Okay. So we're going to go back. It's my understanding that some folk who's on the list were outside.

A-J-E-C-O-L-E, A-J-E-D-A. If you're here, please come to the front.

Youssef Baldi. Youssef Baldi.

Samon Ayeatuwachew.

Kehinde Aderoju.

Prem Chohda.

Andar Wolde. W-O-L-D-E.

Tesfaye Abate. A-B-A-T-E. No?

Tilahun Kassa. K-A-S-A -- K-A-S-S-A.

Adel Becher.

Muhammed Rohman.

Slim Baldi.

Mohamed Tarig.

Binku Jimma.

Abed Temesegen. T-E-M-E-S-E-G-E-N.

Shefer Mengesha. Mengesha.

Sajid Sohail. S-O-H-A-I-L.

Tolla Hailu. H-A-I-L-U.

Alali Nabil.

Bhatti Shahid. S-H-A-H-I-D.

Ayenew Mitiku. M-I-T-I-K-U.

Omisore Abiola.

T-S-E-G-A-Y-E, Wehade, W-E-H-A-D-E.

K-I-D-A-N-E, Theodros.

Hare Amber. All right, we'll move forward.

Dawit, B-E-R-H-A-N-E-S -- oh, that's your, sir? Okay, excellent. Thank you.

Mulawu Kassa. M-U-L-A-W-U, K-A-S-S-A.

Saini Jaswinder. J-A-S-W-I-N-D-E-R.

Mohammed Choudhry. C-H-O-U-D-H-R-Y.

There's someone with the first name M,

they didn't spell it out, but their last name is, C-H-A-U-D-H-R-Y.

Asmare Aemiro. A-E-M-I-R-O. It's your last name?

And then there were 12 speakers from the D.C. Taxi Cab Drivers that are representing 303 drivers. I think one or two, we'll hear from that association. Please come to the front. You will have five minutes to speak.

And that would be, I think the representatives was either Reshan Reda, Aynadis Teka, Ermias Legesse, L-E-G-E-S-S-E, Hykel Kemal. Okay, we're five full.

All right, here we go. Okay. Okay, so, Mr. Dawit, please, I think you were first. Can you pass the microphone down, sir.

Giving you three minutes to speak. Could you spell your name for the record please. Thank you.

MR. BERHANESDLASSIA: My name is Dawit Berhanesdlassia. D-A-W-I-T, B-E-R-H-A-N-E-S-D-L-A-S-S-I-A.

MR. LINDSAY: Please begin.

MR. BERHANESDLASSIA: I've been harking in Washington, D.C. since 1983. And I had my tag since 2009.

2009 I had accident and I had to return the tag. Now when the time for me to be able to buy a car, I couldn't because I couldn't get the H-tag.

The rental car was almost impossible to get. Even if you get it, it's just financially very hard.

Since I've been serving the community for 30 years, I deserve to be able to own my car and serve the community and serve my family. And I want this to be consideration so I can get my H-tag. Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir. Please state your name, sir.

MR. GIZAW: My name is Yohannes, Y-O-H-A-N-N-E-S. Last name Gizaw, G-I-Z-A-W.

MR. LINDSAY: Please begin.

MR. GIZAW: Okay. I will read our

presentation. You know, given the meetings our three minutes only, so --

MR. LINDSAY: No, you're given five. The group is given five.

MR. GIZAW: Okay, thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Yes.

MR. GIZAW: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Please speak into the mic.

MR. GIZAW: Okay. Dear, Panel Members, ladies and gentlemen. First of all I would like to thank the leadership of this Panel for giving us opportunity to express our reviews regarding the issue of H-tag.

After going through the well-designed two days training, the Commission qualified us to be licensed cab drivers in the District.

This didn't take place free of charge, but cost each of us a total of about $700. Which includes schooling, licensing and other processing fees. This is okay.

However, we were not directed to a

situation that gives us hope and courage to enjoy the business. In the state we are exposed to un-exploitation that sucks our blood and breaks our bones.

We have been instructed to rent cars from companies who are left to do whatever they want regarding manipulation of rent prices anytime.

On top of that, the companies never had the capacity and organizational structure to provide durable cabs for rent and the appropriate services.

Currently the rent is in the range of $200 to $350 per week. And we pump gas $30 to $40 per day.

The rules and regulation of D.C. states that the maximum hours a driver can drive per day is 13 hours. However, driving only 13 hours a day doesn't cover all the aforementioned expenses and our living expenses.

Thus we are obliged to work 16 to 20 hours per day to support ourselves and family.

Mind you, in what state of mind will a driver be, while driving 16 to 20 hours per day, don't you think this situation could cause terrible accidents that could hurt both the driver and its passengers. This is resident of the unregulated car rents, action of the car companies.

On the other hand, we drivers deserve to have family time. Giving free labor to unlimited profit making companies should end. We should be given the opportunity to work for ourselves.

Therefore, the solution for all these problems is giving tags, H-tags, to cab renting drivers who has a reason that would positively change a lot of things that include customer service, the environment and economy of the Industry as a whole.

Currently we, the cab drivers, are having great stress due to very open policies that allowed many companies, like Uber, Lyft, Limos and other private companies. And including some individuals are using their own vehicles, in

which we are rental cab drivers are unprivileged to operate with our own cabs. Cars.

The Commission qualified to license cab drivers in the District. However, we are not -- we have not choice to be in business, except renting cabs from drivers, associations and cab companies.

By paying about $800 to $1,200 per month for cab rent. Twenty to 30 weeks -- a week for PSP service credit card processing fee. And vary from rent. Because of the rule you imposed on us, to work with rental cabs, we are obliged to work, as it was said before, 16 to 20 hours. What was the main purpose of all that great training we were given if we can't make any difference in the customer service and safety?

Anyone can imagine that customers are getting the poorest service because of the fact that we are discouraged and abused, during who doesn't even have family time.

Driver associations and companies is that own H-tag have been complaining in protest

every day about their tough survival in the business, because of the fact that other competitors have been all their customers.

If drivers who own H-tag can survive, what can be understood about us? How are we expected and trained to work and subsidize their life and families? Why don't we be given at least the opportunity to work for ourselves and compete with others? Why are we enslaved in the Capital of this great nation known to be the center of freedom?

Giving H-tag and face ID doesn't make any difference in terms of flooding the street with taxicabs. Because of the following reasons. All newly licensed drivers are going to drive cars that are not occupied by others previously. All most all of the cars we rent and drive are just purchased by associations from auctions and individuals that never have been used as vehicles for higher Industry of Columbia.

If we are given H-tag, we are going to clean the street and protest the environments.

The environment of pollution, by giving service with fuel efficient and safe to drive cars.

MR. LINDSAY: Mr. Gizaw, I have to stop you there. You're five minutes is up.

MR. GIZAW: Okay, thank you very much for listening.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you very much. You gentlemen are together, correct?

MR. GIZAW: Yes.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. So the group gets five minutes.

MR. GIZAW: Oh, the group is five minutes.

MR. LINDSAY: So not five minutes apiece, just total.

MR. GIZAW: Oh, okay. So --

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. So you were speaking on behalf of the entire group.

MR. GIZAW: Okay. So --

MR. LINDSAY: I think I explained that to one of your representatives who called to see me, okay.

MR. GIZAW: Okay.

MR. LINDSAY: So I want to thank you guys, we appreciate it. Thank you very much.

MR. GIZAW: Thank you for listening to me.

MR. LINDSAY: Our next speaker or person who will testify, is Fetige Koulibaly. K-O-U-L-I-B-A-L-Y.

I think Tariq Mahmood already spoke.

Bilal Dolamo. Dolamo, D-O-L-A-M-O.

Rotimi Akinruli. A-K-I-N-R-U-L-I.

Ged Woledmedhin. M-O -- I'm sorry. W-O-L-E-D-M-E-D-H-I-N.

Atua Thompson. A-T-U-A, T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N.

Ewnetu Gemechu. E-W-N-E-T-U, G-E-M-E-C-H-U.

Abayoli Orabisi. Last name, O-R-A-B-I-S-I.

Oh, Bilal Dolamo, I think I said that name already, correct? Yes, I said that name already.

Abraham Demisse. D-E-M-I-S-S-E.

Abdulwahab Hassan.

Keder Aulgessa. A-U-L-G-E-S-S-A. Aulgessa, excuse me.

Getinet Tiyiti. T-I-Y-I-T-I. Please come to the -- if you hear your name, just please come to the front. And when we get five we'll begin.

Chouaib Bahoujabour. Last name, B-A-H-O-U-J-A-B-O-U-R.

Emiru Gusu. G-U-S-U.

Mushtaq Gilani, from Icon Cab. Gilani, G-I-L-A-N-I.

Khalid Alhsan. A-L-H-S-A-N.

Mohammad Akrem. A-K-R-E-M.

Elfadil, K-H-A-L-D.

Yohannes Hailemarian. Yohannes Hailemarian.

Raheel Virk. Raheel Virk. V-I-R-K.

Sulieman Ishmal. S-U-L-I-E-M-A-N, I-S-H-M-A-L.

Omar Jarmouni. J-A-R-M-O-U-N-I.

Tesfaye Gebre. G-E-B-R-E.

Abdiricak Kulmie. K-U-L-M-I-E.

Alemayhu, I'm sorry, A-L-E-M-A-Y-H-U. Fanta, F-A-N-T-A.

Eyob Manyagdew. M-A-N-Y-A-G-D-E-W.

A-W-E-T, T-E-S-F-A-M-L-I-R-M-I-N.

Getachew Molla.

Abu Godo. G-O-D-O.

Maru Fenta. F-E-N-T-A.

Dawit Wulle. W-U-L-L-E.

Kwadwo Brobbey. Last name, B-R-O-B-B-E-Y.

Gashaw Birbo. B-I-R-B-O.

Okay, there we have it. All right. By the way, if you guys know -- excuse me. If anyone in here, the ones that I've read, if you know of the person that's outside, you know, you can have them come in and let them know that their name has been called. I'll speak to them aside and we'll definitely take their testimony, okay? Because we don't want to exclude anyone. We want everybody to have an opportunity to

speak, okay?

All right, so we're going to begin. Please, sir, state your name. And spell it out for the record.

MR. TIYITI: My name is, last name, T-I-Y-I-T-I. First name is, G-E-T-I-N-E-T.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay.

MR. TIYITI: Thank you member of the Panelist. Today I'm going to testify upon three points. I represent taxi for like some group of the drivers. Before I came in we talked on some points.

Ask, we ask you now to like -- we took a test and example, for license, what saves us the time.

When we take the exam and the training at the time, that's expected from us. Like good customer service.

But after we do the license we have so many problems that limit us from giving like excellent customer service.

One, the quality of the car we are

renting from the companies are not like comfortable or they are sufficient for us to like, to give service, the transportation. Because many cars are like old and drive for so many times, many years.

Inside have like some tears. They have some mechanical problems. Even when the cars have mechanical problem, when we went to the company, even the company they really, they are not, will accept us. Varied problem with the car and it fixed easily.

For example, I give one. One, my friend, he drive, he's driving for some company. I won't tell you, I don't need to tell the name of the company.

He asked to fix the car. The car have like overheat for some many times. When he went to the car company he asked them, they said, we don't have money to fix for this problem, so if you like drive, if you don't like, leave the car here. There is none for him. So he has no really option, he has to drive the car.

The other point, competition. I think here, two kinds of drivers are here.

One, there are independent drivers and they have their own car, they have their own -- they have their own car and they can drive their own car.

The other one, rent a driver. That means those who are new are renting the car. The independent, they have like fuel efficient, they have hybrid and they have like nice car. Compared to us, our cab. But our cab is like, is not competing with them. Because it has so many problems.

I can give you specifically the evidence, but for the sake of time, I can present the evidence.

The other one, the equality. We are not equal. Because according to the D.C. Taxi Commission we are a driver. And we are equal by the D.C. Taxi Commission. But we need equal, like fair competition among valid drivers and for us. Because valids have their own tag and --

MR. LINDSAY: I have to stop you there, sir. You can, again, submit your written testimony to 2235 Shannon Place.

MR. TIYITI: Okay.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you very much.

MR. TIYITI: All right, thanks.

MR. LINDSAY: Next speaker please. Please spell your name for the record.

MR. HASSAN: My name is Abdulwahab Hassan. A-B-D-U-L-W-A-H-A-B. Hassan, H-A-S-S-A-N.

First, thank you so much for this very important mission for all of us. Major brother supports open system. The current commissioner support open entry system. But what we have is a defective closed system. In the past, DCTC have managed to maintain an open entry by opening the licenses only when the city needed more cabs in the street. And every licensee was able to immediately buy his own car and operator taxi.

The DCTC polices was, with or without intention, have created imbalance between H-tags

and drivers. DCTC supported issuing not just new tags, and made the moratorium on issuing tags for independent taxis, but also extended, without warning, the moratorium to all taxis. Even some replacement for H-tags.

And in this way, they shut down completely issuing H-tags, accept for a few temporarily and unorganized opening favoring companies.

And on the other side, they increased the supply of drivers without limitation. And now we have a huge number of drivers and limited cars.

The result naturally was more demand for cars and more price hikes for rent by companies. And the rent now is $250, as a price in Virginia, which used closed-entry system.

Number two, no available cars for an army of new drivers and yet is still printing new licenses. By the day, three.

Some companies are making more than $200,000 a month for just renting their cars and

their extra tags while drivers suffer just to make a living.

Number five, companies have started to be less caring in maintaining their car. They are maintaining very, very bad cars.

(Applause)

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Hold your clapping because you're interrupting the gentleman and he only has three minutes.

MR. HASSAN: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: After he finished, then you can. If you don't mind.

MR. HASSAN: Sorry. Companies have started to be less caring in maintaining their cars and less caring for the drivers and feel secure. Because they have a long waiting list of drivers and they gained huge money and want to maintain their current imbalance.

The new DCTC practice have prevented drivers from returning their tags if they have to be temporarily or even forever out of service because there is no system to allow them to have

it back.

More new and old drivers are quitting because of lack of cars and rapid changes. And drivers feel they are on the bottom of the list of interests for DCTCs, DCTC, the solution.

It is never too late to recognize the mistake and start in the right direction. I suggest the following.

Open only exams for licensees when there is a need in the city for new drivers. And for now, stop immediately adding more supply of unneeded licensees.

MR. LINDSAY: Sir, sir.

MR. HASSAN: Yes?

MR. LINDSAY: I hate to stop you, but your time is up. Can you give me your name one more time?

MR. HASSAN: My name is Abdulwahab Hassan.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay.

MR. HASSAN: A-B-D-E-L --

MR. LINDSAY: Got you. I gave you an

additional 30 seconds. I gave you an additional 30 seconds. Next speaker please.

MR. HASSAN: You're going to give me 30 seconds?

MR. LINDSAY: I've already given --

MR. HASSAN: Okay.

MR. LINDSAY: Excuse me, I've given you additional 30 seconds.

MR. HASSAN: Can you give me one minute?

MR. LINDSAY: I can't.

MR. HASSAN: Oh.

MR. LINDSAY: Because as you can see, the room is full. Thank you.

Next speaker please. And please spell your name. Next speaker, go ahead.

MR. DEMISSE: Good afternoon, member of the Panel on Industry. My name is Abraham Demisse. A-B-R-A-H-A-M, Demisse, D-E-M-I-S-S-E.

I am a member of D.C. Cab Drivers seeking replacement H-tag. Our members have their own H-tag before DCTC decided to stop

issuing them in the fall of 2010.

Today we don't not have a tag. And while we each returned it for our own business reasons, as former owners of our own cab, we have this in common.

None of us have an H-tag today simply because we complied with long standing industry pardon and practice. All because we complied with Title 31.

Our membership falls into two basic categories. One category is cab drivers who used to be independents.

They returned their H-tag voluntarily believing it was temporary because DCTC had a long standing pardon and practice of letting them do this when their cab was not in service.

In fact, some of our members had returned their tag and secured a replacement multiple times.

DCTC never told these drivers the replacement tag would no longer exist. Because DCTC did not tell them the rules would be

changing, these drivers were stripped of their chance to make an informed decision with respect to their small business.

The second category is drivers who, while all owning their cab, are affiliated with their company or association. These drivers are required by Title 31 to return their tag into the DMV whenever their cab is out of service.

This language can be found in Title 31, Chapter 5, Section 506.2. Chapter 5 does not prohibit cab drivers who comply with its language from getting a replacement H-tag.

Indeed denying these cab drivers a replacement tag punishes them for following the law. This is unfair and it lacks commonsense.

Do not punish us because we followed long standing industry pardon and practice. Do not punish us for having complied with Title 31.

A mistake, resolve this problem by issuing a replacement H-tag to all members right away. Thank you for letting me testify.

MR. AKREM: My name is Mohammad Akrem.

And I've been hacking in Washington, D.C. last 21 years.

And I have returned my tag due to my taxicab was not very much good. But as I tried to get back, I have so many problems.

And now I've been driving as a rental cab driver, which is very hard to afford to the rent and the attitude of the taxicab owners. They are everyday tried to raise the rent. And it's very hard for me to raise my family, with four kids.

So I will request to Panel, please consider this and issue the H-tag to those guys who have been driving and serving the public very honestly in Washington, D.C. Thank you very much.

MR. BIRBO: My name is Gashaw Birbo. My friend has already said all what should be said. And I'm also one of the drivers who got the license in 2013.

And I would like to ask some points. And some of them are, the competition of taxicab

in D.C. is getting tough and very challenging due to the very open policy that allowed many companies to operate in the smallest state of the nation.

Except taxicab, all these companies are allowed to let the drivers compete and to challenge and to work for their service using their own car. Even though the neighbor passed through any trainings of car, operation, business, postures and the polices.

Drivers whose stations in the companies that own H-tag have been complaining and protesting every day about their tough survival in the business because of the fact that other competitors have taken all their customers.

If drivers who own H-tag can survive, what can be understood about us? Are we expected to train and work and subsidize their life and families? Why don't you be given at least opportunity to work for our service and compete with others? Why are we enslaved in the capital of freedom nation?

Giving an H-tag and face ID doesn't make any difference in terms of flooding the streets with a taxicab because of the following reasons. All newly licensed drivers are going to drive cars that are not occupied by others previously.

All most all the cabs we rent are drive are just purchased by associations from auctions and individuals that will never be used as vehicles for hire in the streets of Columbia.

If we are given H-tags we are going to clean the street and the environment by giving service with fuel efficient and safe to drive cabs. So that the District street will be free from dangers to operate unsafe cabs we are renting from associations now.

The second point is, the availability of cab associations don't have well organized customer friendly dispatch and call system. Because of this, many cabs are seen flooding many streets and hotels and dip into residential and recreational areas.

If dispatch system is more organized and improved, and also if DCTC gives us H-tag, we'll provide better customer comfort and safe driver of cars and to give service to customers as they're residents like other competitors.

This is the Nation's Capital, which is the home of Congress and Senators who needs respect and a standard taxi service. Better than the other states.

Also, big meetings and a conference are held by guests from the whole states and other part of the world. In D.C. who expects American standards safe and a comfortable taxicab service.

If H-tag is issued, we can buy comfortable, safe and neat vehicles to give standard taxicab so that we contribute for the positive image of the state.

And lastly, drive associations and the companies did a very negligible improvement in the modernization on cab service, buy them service, and also never considered customer needs

than their income.

It has been DCTC that follows up on customer needs and safety to make --

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. I hate to stop you, but three minutes is up. Thank you very much. Panel, thank you.

I was informed a few folk whose name is on the last, I'm going to call two of them because they were in the list. Mr. Abayoli Orabisi and Mr. Yohannes Hailemarian. If you're here please come to the front.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: They're probably still outside.

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, they're still outside? Okay. All right, we'll hold tight then.

All right, we'll move on down the list. Mr. Abebe Aklog --

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: They coming in now I think.

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, are these the two? We're only two -- okay. If I call your name

please come to the front. Just your names only.

Mr. Abayoli Orabisi, please come to the front.

Mr. Yohannes, H-A-I-L-E-M-A-R-I-A-N. If that's you, please come to the front and have a seat. No? Okay.

Then we'll go down the list. Mr. Abebe Aklog. A-B-E-B-E, A-K-L-O-G.

Farooq, M-I-A-N. Okay.

Mohammad Sharjil Rahman. Mohammad Rahman. R-A-H-M-A-N.

Shefer Mengesha. S-H-E-F-E-R, M-E-N-G-E-S-H-A.

Kehinde Aderoju. A-D-E-R-O-J-U.

Sood Rajesh. R-A-J-E-S-H.

Dhaliwal Jagdee. J-A-G-D-E-E.

Tiruneh Abraham. T-I-R-U-N-E-H, Abraham.

Elias Jimma. E-L-I-A-S, J-I-M-M-A.

Gepe -- G-E-P-E-M-E-S-H, D-E-G-A-F-A-W. No?

Nesibu Girma. Nesibu Girma.

B-R-I-R-U-K, Jimma.

Evelyn Ruiz. R-U-I-Z. All right.

Woldetsadik Tesfaye. W-O-L-D-E-T-S-A-D-I-K. Tesfaye, T-E-S-F-A-Y-E.

Nadew Dehiru. Nadew Dehiru, D-E-H-I-R-U.

M'hamed Katir. M'H-A-M-E-D, K-A-T-I-R.

Mian Arshad. M-I-A-N, A-S -- A-R-S-H-A-D.

Junaid Khan. J-U-N-A-I-D, K-H-A-N.

Tariq Fadle. T-A-R-I-Q, F-A-D-L-E.

Dereje Belachew. B-E-L-A-C-H-E-W.

Teodros Wube. W-U-B-E.

Antenhe Lashitew. L-A-S-H-I-T-E-W.

Biruk Tadesse. T-A-D-E-S-S-E.

Abraham Tiruneh. Tiruneh, T-I-R-U-N-E-H.

Gulelat, Gulelat -- I'm sorry. G-E-L-E -- G-U-L-E-L-A-T. Last name is B-I-A-M-E-S-H.

Mohammed Akram. A-K-R-A-M.

Solomon Woldegebriel. W-O-L-D-E-G-E-

B-R-I-E-L.

Muhammad Tariq. T-A-R-I-Q.

Tesema Erkihun. E-R-K-I-H-U-N.

A-B-A-Y, T-E-G-E-G-N-E.

Simon Gebregzeabher. G-E -- I'm sorry, let me spell your last name. G-E-B-R-E-G-Z-E-A-B-H-E-R. No?

R-E-D-I, Delulo. D-E-L-U-L-O.

I-Z-Z-E-L-D-I-N, Elamin. E-L-A-M-I-N.

Dawit Wulle. W-U-L-L-E.

Behailu Worke. W-O-R-K-E. First name, B-E-H-A-I-L-U.

Mamadu Shaw. M-A-M-A-D-U, S-H-A-W.

MR. SHAW: Yes.

MR. LINDSAY: Please have a seat up front. Yes, that's fine. Thank you. Okay.

All right, first person please state your name for the record. Remember, each one of you all have three minutes to speak, okay?

MR. ORABISI: My name is Abayoli Orabisi. I be driving since 1982. And every year when I going to overseas I always submit my

tag. I get my receipt from DMV.

And this time I went home in 2012. And I sold my cab and I submitted my tag to DMV.

And when I came back I bought another cab. And I went to DMV to get my tag. They said, no, you cannot get it back. And up to this present moment, I don't know the reason why I cannot get it back. So please, I'm renting a cab now for $250 a week. I'm old, I've been driving for so long.

I do it to make the money. $250 a week, you can be out there for almost ten hours. You don't even make $100 a day. And I have to pay $250? And I have three children in college. Please, I need a help.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Sir, can you give me your name one more time, slowly for me.

MR. ORABISI: What did you say? My name?

MR. LINDSAY: What's your name again?

MR. ORABISI: Abayoli Orabisi. I have my receipt here that --

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. I'm just trying to make sure I have you on my list, that's all.

MR. ORABISI: Yes.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. Spell your name for me, sir.

MR. ORABISI: A-B-A-Y-O-L-I, that's my first name.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay.

MR. ORABISI: My initial is, A. The last name is Orabisi, O-R-A-B-I-S-I.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Okay, I'd like to make an announcement. Again, I can't require you to leave, by law, however, after you speak, we have so many folk waiting to speak, as you guys heard on this list, as I go through them.

I think many of these folk are outside. Staff right now are working, going out asking folks if any of their names is on the list. That's why you see the young lady continually bringing me names so that we can get everybody. And we want everyone to be heard.

However, we would like these seats to be available for some of those folk. And I can't require you to leave, but if you've spoken or your group has been represented already, you know, just be considerate and exit so that someone outside, who's on this list wanted to speak, would have the opportunity. Okay? Thank you.

Next speaker please?

MR. AKLOG: All right. My name is Abebe Aklog. A-B-E-B-E, A-K-L-O-G.

I am a member of the leadership team for the 2009 UDC Group. We represent people who hold a license to drive a cab today, because they began the process of getting a face ID in the year 2009 or earlier.

None of our members, however, were ever given an H-tag. In 2009 and earlier, the licensing process had two parts.

Upon passing both parts, the new cab driver was automatically eligible to get an H-tag. Our members took and passed the qualifying

exam at UDC in or before the year 2009. But we were not allowed to take the second part until November 2013. And by then H-tags were no longer available.

Making matters worse, between 2009 and 2013, DCTC refused to tell us what it was doing with our applications. Our requests, somehow members rent a cab full-time, others part-time. And others cannot afford to rent a cab.

Our members have a simple request. That DCTC recognize that how it has timely processed our applications for a face ID back in 2009, we would have qualified for an H-tag before the agency stopped issuing them in the year 2010.

In closing, our members choose to become cab drivers in D.C. specifically because D.C. gave H-tags to cab drivers. If however these options had been suspended or revoked, we were not told of that change prior to starting the licensing process.

Rather, DCTC let us start the process under what everyone believed it still included

the H-tag option. We do not know why DCTC refused to process our applications in 2009. But we do know that this inaction has stripped us of the economy opportunities the agency extended to the cab drivers who were timely processed.

This is unfair to us. So we ask you to solve this problem by doing what the agency was unable or unwilling to do six years ago. Give our members an H-tag right away. Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Could you spell your name for me one more time. I just want to make sure I didn't -- give me your name again?

MR. AKLOG: A-B-E-B-E.

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, Abebe. Okay. Okay. Thank you. Next speaker please. Yes, next speaker please.

MR. ADEROJU: My name is Kehinde Aderoju. K-E-H-I-N-D-E. My last name is, A-D-E-R-O-J-U.

MR. LINDSAY: Please start, sir.

MR. ADEROJU: Well I just wanted to

thank DCTC.

MR. LINDSAY: You have to speak up, sir.

MR. ADEROJU: I use this opportunity to thank DCTC for giving us this opportunity, our feelings. Well I haven't really anything to say, because most of my colleagues have similarly what was said.

What they elude now to purchase. The purpose, we need --

MR. LINDSAY: A couple things. I can't hear you and I'm sure the rest of the group. And you're also being recorded, so do you mind speaking up a little clearly, we can't really --

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Move the mic a little bit closer.

MR. LINDSAY: Slower. Excuse me, I apologize. Go ahead.

MR. ADEROJU: Okay. My name is Kehinde Aderoju.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay.

MR. ADEROJU: My last name is Aderoju.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Pull the mic closer to you.

MR. ADEROJU: Okay.

MR. LINDSAY: There you go.

MR. ADEROJU: Okay. I'm using this opportunity to thank DCTC for giving us opportunity to speak.

Most of our colleagues are saying what I want to say, but the reason, we only need -- I need only H-tags. That is it.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Next speaker please.

MS. RUIZ: Good morning to the Commission and to all the attendees. My name is Evelyn Ruiz.

I am the manager of the Classic Cab Association. I am requesting to this Panel to reactivate my two H-tags. H-98755 with PBIN D471.

In June of 2013 my driver, Solomon Okoroh, was robbed and shoot to death. The OAG

kept my taxicab for over a year, as in evidence.

I continued paying the insurance from June 2013 until the tag expired in February 2014. In July 2014 I tried to put a replacement vehicle for it, but it was denied.

Second license plate is H-99847 with PBIN D4830. In 2013 my driver got involved in a terrible accident.

The case was filed and heard in court for over a year. I continued paying for the insurance from June 2013, until the tag expired in February 2014. I tried to put a replacement vehicle in July 2014, but also denied.

I had been requesting for both license plates to be reactivated with Mr. Linton and Mr. Scott. Then Mr. Rogers and Mr. Scott. But I was only given hope and then nothing.

In my opinion on the issuance of H-tags. H-tags should be reactivated if they had PBIN, if insurance had been paid until the tags expired, if the H-tags and DCTC registration are still in the owner's possession.

In my opinion, new H-tags should be issued to the companies that are willing to add new WAV to their fleet without mandating to register with Yellow or Transco for a dispatch service.

No, I am not in favor to open the issuance of H-tags for everybody. We have to control and prioritize. We need a written guidelines, not just by word of mouth.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. Have a wonderful day.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Please pronounce your name, sir. Thank you much.

MR. SHAW: Good morning. My name is Mamadu Shaw.

MR. LINDSAY: Spell that for me, please.

MR. SHAW: M-A-M-A-D-U, Mamadu. Shaw, S-H-A-W. Shaw.

I am a cab driver since the beginning of this year. So I am a family of seven and I am the only that's working.

So I'm appealing for the Commission to give me a tag so that I can able to take care of my family. I'm also happy about the competition that you allow now in D.C. in D.C. Taxicab.

Now we are doing a good job and the customer service is very good now. The customers have a choice of payment. Now we are doing that correctly.

But the only thing that we are having now, about the Uber. Uber doesn't have the requirement that we, the D.C. cab driver, have.

So we can't be afraid of competing with Uber. But if they have the same requirement that we have, it will be a fair competition.

We are appealing to the Commission to help us, give us tag. So that we can compete with the Uber.

And the customers have this now. We are doing very good about the resident and the authorities that coming, because we are able to speak English well to them and talking to them and showing them certain places that they need

to.

But Uber is giving us a hard time because, first of all, they are charging less than the amount that we, by the Taxicab Industry. And we are appealing, please help us to give us tag.

We are family members. Most cab drivers have more than two or three family members. And most of us, we are the only one that are working.

We are appealing to you, please help us get a tag numbers. Thank you very much. May God bless you all.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Okay, so Adel Becher. A-D-E-L, B-E-C-H-E-R. Please.

Slim Baldi. Slim Baldi, please have a seat. Okay.

Next on the list is Minale Yerdaw. M-I-N-A-L-E, Y-E-R-D-A-W.

Alemu Filatie. A-L-E-M-U, F-I-L-A-T-

I-E.

Bevawork Gebreyohanise. Last name, G-E-B-R-E-Y-O-H-A-N-I-S-E, Gebreyohanise. Sorry, I just chopped up your name.

Tessaye Wako. T-E-S-S-A-Y-E, W-A-K-O.

Beseraw Gibrimichael. G-I-B-R-I-M-I-C-H-A-E-L.

Leul Ghidey. G-H-I-D-E-Y.

Taera Jirata. T-A-E-R-A, J-I-R-A-T-A.

Daniel Weldemeskel. Daniel Weldemeskel. W-E-L-D-E-M-E-S-K-E-L.

Brook Yoseph. Brook Yoseph. Brook Yoseph.

Tesena Erkihus. T-E-S-E-N-A, E-R-K-I-H-U-S.

Bekalu Gizaw. Last name, G-I-Z-A-W.

A-D-D-E-L-K-R-I-M, A-K-L-I. Last name, A-K-L-I.

First name, Elmostapha Ghalim. E-L-M-O-S-T-A-P-H-A, G-H-A-L-I-M.

Nidussie, G-O-B-E-N-A.

Keith Sampler. Keith Sampler.

Yahya Jama. Y-A-H-Y-A, J-A-M-A.

First name is, C-H-O-U-A-I-B. Last name is, B-A-H-O-U-J-A-B-O-U-R.

Azawan Amazigh. A-Z-A-W-A-M, A-M-A-Z-I-G-H.

Raj Khan. R-A-J, K-H-A-N.

Shiraz Kahn. S-H-I-R-A-Z, K-H-A-N. Thank you.

Benaissa Benmessaoud. Last name, B-E-N-M-E-S-S-A-O-U-D.

Muhammad Zaheer. Z-A-H-E-E-R.

Fekadu Hailu. F-E-K-A-D-U, H-A-I-L-U.

Goitom Issac. G-O-I-T-O-M, I-S-S-A-C.

Nessibu Bezabeh. Last name, B-E-Z-A-B-E-H.

Olasoji Olaniyi. Last name, O-L-A-N-I-Y-I.

Alemahun Bersomaa. B-E-R-S-O-M-A-A.

Urrahman Halim. H-A-L-I-M.

Fekadu Yofef. Last name, Y-O-F-E-F.

Ronald Bethea. Ronald Bethea.

Okay, that's our five. All right, please, sir, spell your first name. You may begin, sir.

MR. BECHER: Okay. My name Adel Becher. A-D-E-L, Becher, B-E-C-H-E-R.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. Please begin.

MR. BECHER: Okay. Good afternoon, Taxicab Commission. I want to thank the Panel for giving us the chance to speak about the H-tag.

I would like to get an H-tag for an important reason. Number one, fuel efficiency and low emission vehicle that support the environment.

Number two, both better clientele and customer satisfaction. Number three, I support D.C. and am willing to do the best I can to build a better D.C. for raise -- for a family, friends, visit and outfitter.

So again, thank you so much. I appreciate this big opportunity to talk, speak about the H-tag. And my best regard.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you so much.

MR. BECHER: Thank you so much.

MR. LINDSAY: Next speaker please.

MR. BALDI: My name is Baldi, Slim.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay.

MR. BALDI: Last name Baldi, B-A-L-D-I. First name Slim, S-L-I-M. Thank you for this opportunity.

I've been living in D.C. for almost 25 years. I live in D.C. I've been working as a cab driver for almost 15 years in the Metropolitan area.

In the last six years I've been driving in D.C. I work for a company, because the reason I came, for the H-tag. I lost at least 30 to 35 percent of my income due to Uber. And I'm working for a company and I'm paying like $315 a week, which is like $1,260.

And I cannot afford to do this because I'm in a point to losing my house. Because I lost, like I said, I lost like 30 to 40 percent to Uber. I cannot afford my mortgage anymore. I'm like a couple of months away from losing my

mortgage.

And the only reason I'm here, I was hoping to get like a H-tag that could help me with my mortgage. Because I could save at least, at least $600 on the payment, like monthly. And I could save at least, at least another $400 on gas if I buy a hybrid car.

And I've been trying to do that. To buy a hybrid car. But I cannot -- I have to have a H-tag.

And I have a family of four. And I really cannot afford to lose my house. If you could please help me with the H-tag. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: What city were you driving in?

MR. BALDI: I live in Northeast, D.C.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: What city were you driving in before you started driving in D.C.?

MR. BALDI: I worked in Red Top and Barwood.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you very much, sir. Next speaker please. Please say your name.

MR. YOSEPH: My name is Brook Yoseph. B-R-O-O-K, Y-O-S-E-P-H. Good afternoon. Thank you for this dignified opportunity for us to voice our opinion.

As my colleague has pointed out, most of the common and well heard reasons, but are highlighted by beginning with this.

First and foremost, the adverse environment, which unduly and significantly harms current D.C. taxi drivers that are operating without the H-tag financially per year can be equated, minimum of $24,960 as an operating cost. I'll summarize the adverse environment in the end.

In continuing, the second part to my opinion is, the advantage of issuing individual H-tags for the current D.C. licensed taxi operators are as follows. And I'll skip the ones already stated.

That is to provide a better

opportunity for drivers to make sustainable income and get off of District issued welfare. It does not make sense to withhold H-tag and turn around and give food stamps and affordable housing when able members can do that for themselves.

Next, is to reduce the current licensed drivers' dependency on social welfare's.

And the last one is, increase the amount of operating revenue for the DCTC. The more drivers that are able to have their own H-tag, the more operating revenues that the D.C. Taxicab Commission can bring in to sustain its daily and annual operation.

This is my personal opinion and a possible criteria for issuing the H-tag, as there are many, is as follows. Provide a vehicle within a reasonable time period that meets the DCTC guidelines.

Obtain the required operating insurance. Maintain current taxicab operating license and install the required equipment, as

outlined within the guidelines.

Pay all operating costs associated with individual ownership and have a transparent and up to date electronic monitoring so that everybody has a fair chance at making a living.

In conclusion, the D.C. Taxicab H-tag should be issued to those that are legally license in DCTC to operate within the District.

The current moratorium on H-tag is baseless. Since the implementation the District had absorbed over 20,000 private vehicles for hire under various companies that do not meet the standards set by the DCTC.

Therefore, the old outdated taxi per capita formula is inadequate in determining the number of H-tags needed to meet the drivers demand. Instead, the demand of the taxi rights should be determined by the individual daily activities in the District as well as hundreds of events taking place. Thank you very much.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Thank you, sir. Please give me your name, please.

MR. OLANIYI: My name is Olaniyi Olasoji.

MR. LINDSAY: Spell it.

MR. OLANIYI: O-L-A-N-I-Y-I. My first name is Olasoji, O-L-A-S-O-J-I. Thank you so, Panel, for giving us this opportunity to sit before you and tell you our minds.

You see, America was built on freedom. We want freedom. And we need a fair and reasonable competition.

We allow Uber to buy their own cars, which is very rummy. Not everybody likes new things. In which we know there are many customers, not because of the fare, but because of the convenience.

They have a nice car in 2011, 2014, 2018. Something like that. Because it's more convenient and it's roomy. It's nice. It's cool. So we can't continue to be under pressure or slavery by renting junk cars. The cars of 2008 that went auction, freeze it up, I give it to you.

Why, because we have no option. We have to feed our family. Is what we have available and how we're going to get. And I want to say, it will be better paid down like security deposit. Apart from your rent.

Yes. You got to put down security deposit and you can pay your rent. Where you're living, they give you back your money. Which means we got no option. We got to go there and walk.

I don't want food stamps because I want to work. You know, I don't want my name to be on food stamps or on it.

So we are hoping. That is why we are very so much happy for giving this opportunity. For people to come before you and say their minds. So thank you so much, and God bless.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: We're going to take a ten minute break.

(Off-microphone comments)

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Excuse me, he was on the corner, I didn't recognize him.

MR. LINDSAY: Yes, please go ahead, sir.

MR. BETHEA: My name is Ronald Bethea. I'm here in two capacities today. One, as a veteran African-American cab driver in the District of Columbia for 44 years who did carry his people to Southeast Washington and Northeast Washington, D.C. at night.

I retired from driving a cab on October 31st, 2014 behind this H-tag issue. I was no longer able to maintain my residents in the District because of problems with my vehicle. Which were beyond my control.

I have a 3 year old grandson now who was -- my daughter was expecting at that time. And I had an expired inspection sticker, but my tags were good on my cab.

So I happened to have to jump in my vehicle and take my daughter to Holy Cross in Montgomery County. I was stopped.

The police, the Montgomery County,

took my tags off of my car, wrote me eight tickets. I went to court in Montgomery County and was exonerated from all charges. I never got my tags back from Montgomery County Police Department.

Now it was forced, as these gentlemen have eloquently stated, to have to rent a cab from Mr. Jerry Shaffer for almost two and a half years after being a driving for 44 years owning his own vehicle. And a District resident at that time.

The sad part about this thing was I paid the insurance until, on my tags, until my face ran out. And the light came out on my head.

Why should I ruin a hack license with all of the impediments in the marketplace such as Uber, Lyft and all these other people working for free, but I can't even get a H-tag after 44 years of service in this community.

And I rest my case. It makes no sense for veteran drivers who were licensed and had vehicles before 2006, not even be able to get a

tag to put their car back out on the street.

And as I said, I have my story, but each one of you have your own story. It makes no sense for this Commission to have frozen these tags these years and now we are faced with a 12 to every -- a cab driver on the street to every 1,000 people. We got too many cabs.

But we're still under this pressure where people are losing their homes and they have to come here today because of these H-tags. So thank you very much for giving me a little more time.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir, I appreciate it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Mr. Bethea. I apologize that I was getting ready to do a ten minute before you talked. You was on the corner and I didn't recognize that it was your turn. So I apologize. And thank you for your statement.

MR. BETHEA: Yes, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Now we'll take a ten minute break and we'll start back where we

left off from. So, please, anyone that have testimony, come back in ten minutes.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 12:48 p.m. and resumed at 1:13 p.m.)

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: First, I'd like to thank you all for being patient and staying for the rest of the hearing. Thank you very much. The meeting will now be back in session.

MR. LINDSAY: Let me make a statement. We will have time, I believe, based upon the remaining witnesses, to take testimony from folk who did not register.

So I think there will be an opportunity to be heard, okay. Because a couple folk came up and asked me, and I do think there will be time for that, okay.

All right, so let's get back to the list. Mr. O-M-I-K-U-N-L-E, O-L-U-W-A-F.

G-E-T-A-H-U-M, A-M-E-D-E.

T-E-Z-E-R-A, A-B-B-E. Tezera Abbe.

Khaleel Ahmad. Khaleel Ahmad.

Mohammad Morman of Silver Cab.

Mohammad Morman.

Belaye Tuffer. B-E-L-A-Y-E, T-U-F-F-E-R.

Minilik Teseri. T-E-R -- T-E-S -- Teseri, T-E-S-E-R-I.

Khan Masso. K-H-A-N, M-A-S-S-O.

Bhiyen Mohammadhuda.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: I think he's there.

MR. LINDSAY: All right, thank you.

Merid Kahsay. M---E-R-I-D, K-A-H-S-A-Y.

Tesfaye Khaddis. K-H-A-D-D-I-S.

Falese Akintoye. Falese Akintoye.

Kamran Ibrahim. K-A-M-R-A-N, Ibrahim.

Yohannes Yilma. Yohannes Yilma.

Ayele Sewasew. S-E-W-A-S-E-W.

Abdulmelik Shifa. Okay.

So those are the reaming names on my list. After this Panel, those who wish to testify who did not submit testimony, we'll let you come up. But we're going to need you to sign

in. If you don't mind. If you'd like to testify.

(Off-microphone comments)

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. You would like to testify? You already, okay. Mr. Youssef Baldi, because you're already on the list.

MR. BALDI: Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Okay. So just these four. Excuse me, excuse me. I apologize. Okay, we'll begin.

Okay, ready, sir? You can begin, sir. Go ahead.

MR. MORMAN: Good afternoon. My name is Mohammed Morman from Silver Cab Company. I have some highlights regarding the issuing a H-tag.

As a business man, as a business man I should ask for -- can I start?

MR. LINDSAY: You can go ahead. I'm sorry.

MR. MORMAN: Good afternoon. My name is Mohammad Morman. I've from Silver Cab

Company.

As a business man I should ask for more tag, for H-tags. But regarding my cab driver complaining every single day, which they are losing 30, 35 percent of their income and that's going to damage them more than to not issue tag.

If we are going to issue more tags, it's going to be more people and they will lose more income. And their income from 35 to 40 percent where they will lose 50 to 55 percent more income.

So I would like to concern about that one. And I'm sure the cab driver will not happy with the more tags.

Number two, it is not good for the public. It's going to be a very more -- it's going to more congestion on the city. It's going to be more traffic, it's going to be more congestion on the traffic regarding the issuing more tags.

Number three, I'm sure the government

will not like it, is instead of the police to go for the crime, drug trafficking. Those things.

And they will be stuck with the accident of those tags of congestion and blocking every block. So I will not be happy to issue more tag unless for the people they do drive or they did drive the last 15 to 20 years, yes.

And they had the tag before 2006. March of 2006. Yes, I would like to issue a tag for those people. Not for everybody. Because we don't need it.

We do have 7,500 for 7,000 cab drivers. And there are more than 12 to 13,000 Uber. And if we are going to issue another 2,000 more tag, D.C. doesn't need, on the top of everything's, we do need a good clear study and survey. Do we need or no.

After the study then the Panel can decide, do we need it or not. Otherwise it's going to be a big, big problem for the public, for the police, for everybody.

And it's going to be a very big

congestion inside the city. And we see it every day. And thank you very much.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Yes, please pronounce your name, sir.

MR. MOHAMMEDHUDA: Good afternoon. Everyone, my name is Bhiyen Mohammedhuda and I am a fellow D.C. taxi driver. And previously driven in a residential Diamond Cab about a decade.

And like many of taxi driver, I would like to present my opinion about this tag. When I started this job I had to rent a yellow cab. I have been driving it for a while in D.C.

The reason I have been renting this cab is because I have no H-tag from DCTC. With renting this cab I am using my situation is not in a very good condition -- is good sort.

The cab I am currently driving is a Ford Crown Victoria. So it is not energy efficient. And it is old, consumes too much gas and has some broken parts here and there.

Adding to this, I am currently in a financial crisis because business is quite slow.

With the way, it is now another part of my income goes to paying for my rent, cab and gas when my money should be going to support my family. With all my money getting dried out from renting and gas.

I am starting to have a very narrow income. Therefore, I'm requesting that H-tag should be issued to me because if they were, I would be able to drive my energy efficient hybrid Toyota Prius on the road. This will not only be fortunate for me, but for my whole family.

If H-tag will not be issued, I am afraid I have to take my wife and two kids and head back to Bangladesh. All because my earning would go to rent and gas. And not for my family.

Anyway, thank you very much listening me, to listening me and my speech about my current hardship. And allowing me to get to speak here today. So thank you very much and God bless you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Next speaker please.

MR. FELESE: My name's Akintoye, A-K-I-N-T-O-Y-E, Michael, Felese, F-E-L-E-S-E. I want to express my opposition for allowing us to say our opinion concerning our situation.

I am a taxi, D.C. taxi driver. And I believe all of the driver are the image of DCTC.

In the present situation where there is a lot of competition, we are the immediate transportation system or the deregulated in D.C. Where we have so many branches that is providing services.

It would be a pleasure if we are in a situation to compete with other service providers.

My argument goes to the -- I mean condition, present condition of the H-tag. Which of course there are so many are forced that was like driving. Having the license but not having opportunity to have -- not given opportunity to have a tag.

It is going to be a -- like a player. If DCTC can consider drivers and issue tags for

those who are -- I mean for those who are driving. So that they could be able to get their own convenient car to provide services for their customers. I mean to like -- for convenience for the customer and for the drivers.

I have two examples. I have a friend that was renting a car. And he woke up in the morning preparing to go to work. He was called by his company. Can you please come to the office today? Today is -- I mean your admission is due for today.

He went there and unfortunately it was like picking the -- the cab was taken from me. And for two weeks it was at home. The cab wouldn't even go through the emissions process.

And if that particular person have a tag on his own and is able to get a --

MR. LINDSAY: I have to stop you right there. You have a three minute limit. I've actually let you go over about 30 seconds. All right, thank you.

But if you have a written testimony

you would like for us to get those, that information, those stories, the record, when I say the record, you guys can submit any documentation you'd like. More testimony, for this hearing. It will close on July 30th.

Now we are having a second hearing -- I'm sorry, excuse me. The record will close for this hearing on July 31st.

However, we're having a second hearing, similar in nature, on July 30th. Thursday July 30th, okay. Thank you.

Yes, sir? Mr. Baldi.

MR. BALDI: Yes. My name is Youssef Baldi and thanks for having us today. To listen about this H-tag request.

I'm here actually to -- there's a lot of things that I would like to talk about, but I know I don't have enough time.

But anyway, I had the tag since 2004, I returned it around 2010. But I didn't know that you wouldn't be able to get your tags back. So I'm waiting.

I mean for -- I went to the office and they said, we can no longer give tags back, you just have to wait until, you know, something happens. So, you know.

And but I'm here also for other important things. I think it's nice to have your own car for many reasons.

I mean I've been also renting for like eight years, so I supported the cab association. They are very good with, you know, charging reasonable fees, you know, repair, all that.

But, you know, there is a line of course. I mean there's a -- but somehow, someday you're going to own a cab. There's nothing wrong with that.

Besides that, I think having your own car it builds better customer service. You know, nice clean car. You know, a friendly low emissions, you know, fuel efficient. That builds more customer that way. It helps better, in my opinion.

And there are many other services who

have joined now in the last couple years, so it has affected our income. Many drivers are there like me, I lost about 30 percent. You know, I work ten hours. It's not the same way three or four years ago.

So I mean there's a lot of conflict. But I mean I hope our service will get better. You know, maybe proving apps or something.

And the old drivers, you know, who have been there a long time, you know, they deserve to get their own cars, their own H-tags.

And that's it. Thank you very much for listening.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, Mr. Baldi. Yes, sir.

MR. KULMIE: Good afternoon. Thank you for hearing. I think you, Mr. Tapscott, if I pronouncing your name. Mr. Lerner and Ms. Muhammad and Mr. Lindsay. If I pronounced your name, I'm sorry.

I'm here --

MR. LINDSAY: Can you give me your

name please?

MR. KULMIE: My name is Abdiricak Kulmie. My last name is, K-U-L-M-I-E. My first name is Abdiricak, A-B-D-I-R-I-C-A-K.

I am here to get H-tag. I am a new driver. You showed me how to fish, but I don't have the bucket.

And I'm here, I need your help. I've been here 24 years in Washington and Virginia.

I work Office Depot for 15 years. And I'm able, I cannot work. I cannot stand.

Now I can, my car is hand controlled. I have gas and brake on the hand. I like to work five hours a day, maybe I cannot work.

Because I pay my company for $250 a week. That's almost $2,000 for my applying. Plus gas and everything.

I really, really need help, if you can help me. Please help me with H-tag or give me this opportunity to work. Thank you.

MR. LERNER: I will get you a bucket if you want one.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Thank you guys for your testimony.

MR. LINDSAY: I believe that's those with the -- that's it for the witnesses who either called in or sent an email that were registered.

So I think now we'll take the witnesses who didn't register. The first name on that list is Mr. Omikunile Oluwaf. Saeed Khan. Massoud Medghalchi.

MR. MEDGHALCHI: Medghalchi.

MR. LINDSAY: Medghalchi.

Haimanot Bizuayeu. B-I-Z-U-A-Y-E-U.

And Leul Ghidey. I think Mr. Ghidey actually registered. Nonetheless. Yes, he was number 111. Yes, okay.

So for the record, can you please spell your name.

MR. OMIKUNLE: Yes, man. My first name is Oluwaf Omikunle.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. Could you spell it please?

MR. OMIKUNLE: And I register and my number is 136.

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, you did register?

MR. OMIKUNLE: Yes, I registered.

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, you're mister --

MR. OMIKUNLE: 136.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. Okay, 130. Thank you.

MR. OMIKUNLE: 136.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. You can begins, sir.

MR. OMIKUNLE: Thank you, sir for this opportunity to give it to us.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Pull the mic a little closer.

MR. OMIKUNLE: To be present here. And I be driving, I mean I've been driving for -- for driving cab. And we express a lot of change of driving outside there because we drive with disgrace sometime, the driver takes care. But thank God everything is okay.

I've been renting a car, sometime a

month, we no get a cab back. Maybe the car, the last time it experienced in a cab was have a problem. Of transmission.

And for six weeks I can't get a cab back. I run around today the company. When I get there they say, oh, there's no cab available.

And I had good credits to get a car. I have a good credit. I can go to the dealer and get a new car. It's not that I would get another car outside there driving, damaged body.

Some time we get a car, we start eating the money, in the afternoon it's back up. Like me I have a mortgage I pay. We are six in the family. I'm the only one that's working.

I'm about to lose my house because I can't pay the mortgage no more. I need to run around to my friends to support me.

But right now, for to get a rent of, with the company, we pay deficits before you can get a car. Sometimes you pay like $250. I had $255 every week.

And outside of there is nowhere we can

get it. Uber, they are good -- I have a friend that was doing Uber. 2015, a lot of money.

Compliancy for a driver, compliancy for a customer. And good service.

And I had spent some time, because sometime I working nights, people would drink and for me, inside the car. And they cannot do for Uber. I just bang your car, I go.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir. Remember, those who have not registered get two minutes to speak. Okay? Thank you.

MR. OMIKUNLE: Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Mr. Saeed Khan.

MR. KHAN: My name is Saeed A. Khan. And good afternoon, Commissioners.

I have been with you since last 26, 27 years. And these are the books which we had at that time. These were the papers which we read at that time. And we were having very good relation with the Taxicab Commission and the customers. Not a single complaint against me in this quarter century.

And all this record shows, basically I'm a professional accountant but I really tries to work as a cab driver. And a self-employed and independent job holder.

After having so many years, DCTC tags and renewed the tags year after years, for year after years.

For some reason I surrendered my tags February 28th, 2010 to have a new vehicle and change the vehicle. But unfortunately I applied for the new tags and I was refused.

Then I have to co-sign with Ese Cab Company. Title is mine, signed by them as well. Car is mine, registration is mine, insurance is mine and Ese Cab Company is asking me $100 a month just for the cost co-signature.

I don't know, after so many workings, why we have to give them the money. What for? This is not justice with the senior cab drivers who spent a quarter century in taxicab industry by providing best cab services.

Until now I have not a single

complaint in DCTC regarding my taxicab operations. I request humbly to issue my tags back and oblige, give a pride back to cab driver. Thank you very much, Commissioner.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir. Mister --

MR. MEDGHALCHI: Medghalchi.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. Can you spell your name slowly please.

MR. MEDGHALCHI: Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Tapscott and Commissioners. Thank you for opportunity to testify today. I'm going to beat a dead horse again.

The owner operators of this business comprise of 70 percent, if not more, of the entire Industry. Our interest has never been taken into account.

There has been unscrupulous cab chairman that sold licenses before that added unneeded cabs to this system. There were people in city council that wanted to create jobs so they dumped more people on the Industry.

There were nefarious different examples of different actions taken by D.C. Taxicab Commission when they wanted to basically bring a revenue that added more tags.

I'm not against people that lost their tags unfairly. I stated this in front of Mr. Linton.

I whole heartedly agree with everyone that for some unfortunate reason, a bad accident or something, lost their tag and they came to a surprise when they came to get their tags. They basically were surprised that they could not reinstate their tags.

However, the interest of the 70 percent or more, of the Industry that have lost their income, their downtime is going to what? I have 1:56 minutes of downtime that is recorded on the PSB. So I cannot be lying about it.

The fact is there are too many people in this Industry. 1.6 to 2 cabs per 1,000 people is the standard used in the entire industrialized world. Including this country.

We have the highest numbers in this country recorded our 3.3 per 1,000 people. D.C. has 12 per 1,000 people.

There are too many cabs. On top of that, over 13,000 cars has been added by the shared car driving. This cannot be --

MR. LINDSAY: I hate to cut you off.

MR. MEDGHALCHI: Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Again, if you have written testimony.

MR. MEDGHALCHI: We will be, sir.

MR. LINDSAY: Please. The record is open --

MR. MEDGHALCHI: Absolutely.

MR. LINDSAY: -- until the 20th --

MR. MEDGHALCHI: 30th.

MR. LINDSAY: 30th.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Pass the mic down.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Please state your name and spell it for us please.

MR. BIZUAYEHU: Good afternoon. My

name is Haimanot Bizuayehu. I'll spell it for you. First name, H-A-I-M-A-N-O-T. Last name, B-I-Z-U-A-Y-E-H-U.

And I'm a cab driver in Washington, D.C. for the last 20 years. The reason why, I have been testifying before this Commission many times before. But the reason why I'm here today is regarding the issuance of the H-tag.

I support the D.C. Taxicab open system. But at the same time that open system has to be fair and also has to be abided by the 1985 D.C. Taxicab Commission Establishment Act.

In that act it states that the issuance of either high classes, I mean H-tag, should depend on the demand and supply in the city.

Now when I see it, because I hark every day, these Industry is saturated. Even before the emergence of this Uber, Lyft and all the other taxi companies.

If we continue to issue additional, new additional, mind you, I said new additional

H-tags, it's going to make it a little more saturated.

I can understand my friends, the cab drivers testifying, that the issuance of H-tag will help them bring in new cars. Bring general income for their family members. I can understand that.

But at the same time this Commission, this Panel, has to consider those who already are in the system. Who few of us are saturated.

You are going to drive us into poverty, into welfare as I stated. Okay, that has to be considered.

But I think is my time is limited because I forget to register. So next time I will register, have more time.

But I'll make one point only here. Regarding the H-tag for those guys have written the tags before, because that has been a long practice of DCTC. You returning your tag, you come back and you get into the system very easily.

So that opportunity, that has been taken away from them without proper advance notice or that tag has to be returned to them.

Regarding one point, please, just 30 seconds.

MR. LINDSAY: You get ten.

MR. BIZUAYEHU: What?

MR. LINDSAY: Ten seconds.

MR. BIZUAYEHU: Okay. The other thing is, for those guys who came into the system after 2006 in what was registration and title, co-title was the companies. I have no, because see, that already in the system.

Since you're not issuing new tags, if that ownership should be transferred to them will be fine. Thank you very much, I appreciate.

MR. LINDSAY: With those final points, I encourage you to submit written testimony to us, okay.

MR. BIZUAYEHU: I will do so, sir.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, thank you, thank you. Yes, next speaker.

MR. GHIDEY: Good afternoon, Commissioners. My name is Leul, L-E-U-L. Last name is Ghidey, G-H-I-D-E-Y. Register 111.

I've been driving the cab for 19 years. And trying to get my tag back was -- I'm suspended for some reasons that I don't know without any advance notice. But I couldn't get my tag back. It's been almost close to three and a half years or more than three years.

So driving a cab and renting when someone, somebody says that sometimes I can't even get the cars. So I don't have the time, I'm not feeling good to talk about that. Thanks.

But I need my tag back and I don't know the reason why I couldn't take my own tag and been taken. So try to drive a cab with my own and my own registration and my own new cars.

But I've been asking for the Commissioner, so many times I've been told, be wait and we'll let you know when further evidence. And so many reasons.

But I cannot take it anymore. So I

couldn't find any car to rent because of the new peoples who are registered in the companies. So I have to be waiting three weeks, two weeks to get a car or more than that.

So lately sitting home without driving a car if I don't find one. So the Commissioner considered this and let me have my own tag and registration so I can have my own cab. Thank you so much.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you very much, sir. Mr. Keith Sampler? I believe he was previously registered.

Yohannes Hailemarian? H-A-I-L-E-M-A-R-I-A-N. Yohannes Hailemarian. He just signed up. No? Let me say it one more time. He just signed up. Yohannes, H-A-I-L-E-M-A-R-I-A-N? Okay.

Asefa Aga. A-S-E-F-A, A-G-A.

MR. AGA: Right here.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. Azeb Adal. A-Z-E-B, A-D-A-L.

Wow, okay. S-I-N-T-A-Y. Does that

name ring a bell? Okay. Okay.

And do we have, is that five? Okay, that's five. All right. I think Mr. Sampler is first. So, Mr. Sampler.

Well his name was first. I'm trying to keep it in order. And he was already registered. Please, go ahead, Mr. Sampler.

MR. SAMPLER: Good afternoon, Committee members and employees, friends.

My name is Keith Sampler, Tag number 62762. Been a taxicab driver in the District for 32 years.

And I lost my tags via accident. I held the tags. I had received compensation for the vehicle, the loss of the vehicle.

And I held the tags for probably about nine months. In fear of being penalized, I turned the tags in.

And when I was contemplating buying a vehicle I was unable to get my tags back. Because I realized that, you know, in the past that if you didn't turn you tags with the

insurance being expired, that you will be penalized for that.

So I was willing to turn them in. Surrender them. And I was just denied getting my tags back.

And I came up here, not long ago, inquiring if I could get on a list. Because I was told at the cab company that I drove with that you had to get on the list to receive your tags back.

And the young lady at the desk told me that the list was only open for 30 days. And I left confused.

So I saw that they were having a hearing so I thought I would come up here and make my testimony and hopefully I will be considered in getting my tags back. Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: I think I can make a comment. There was no open list to receive H-tags. This process is to -- this Panel was charged with study in the Industry to determine whether we should issue H-tags. If so, how many

and under what consideration.

So I'm not sure what information you received, but we are -- we're not issuing H-tags on an individual basis.

MR. SAMPLER: Right.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay?

MR. SAMPLER: Yes, sir.

MR. LINDSAY: I just wanted to be real clear with that. Okay, thank you.

Can we have the next speaker please? Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, can you spell your name and --

MR. HAILEMARIAN: Okay, good afternoon. My name is Yohannes, Y-O-H-A-N-N-E-S. And the last name is Hailemarian, H-A-I-L-E-M-A-R-I-A-N.

Today I came here to testify. I'm a cab driver since 1983. What happened is, as any cab drivers who live here, a day-to-day based life.

Saying that, I mean we don't have a 401K or no retirement or big thing to think

ahead.

Since I am a family man and I have a three son, which two of them go to college and one is young man, I return -- I surrender my tag in 19, I mean 2012 due to my father illness. I go back to my country, back and forth.

And by the time I came back in 2012 to get my tag, they told me, without any notice, I mean you shouldn't get your tag back. So, which is no fair.

I mean I've been serving the city so long and didn't get anything, feedback. I mean we should get the same as other drivers that have all kind of reasons.

What is our benefit? I mean we serve, of course we live and I'm so glad to work for the District. But what do I get then?

I mean I can't go back to the welfare system. Right now I'm paying $250 a week, which I can't afford it. To even support my family.

So in order to this statement, this Panel, I mean consider all these things and try

to get my tag. The same as other drivers. Thank you very much.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir. You were pre-registered by the way.

Next? Sir, can you please spell your name for us?

MR. AGA: Asefa Aga.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. You can begin.

MR. AGA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately I broke my reading glasses.

Anyway, I'm actually here to testify what is going on in this Industry. My background is analyst. Actually I've been with -- who I work for, held the Department for the State of Maryland and Ethiopia as well.

So I just like driving. I started cab driving like ten years ago. Which was in PG County. I've been driving here only for a year.

Not only cab, but I drive Lyft and Uber as well. So even though it's not really long, as analyst I can see what is going on in this Industry.

So there is a challenge. The test for new drivers is changing. It's not only here, everywhere.

Why Uber is interfering in the cab industry, because cab industry was really weak. We are unable to modernize their fleet.

There is no well-organized call system. People want to call from their home. From their, you know, workplace. From maybe where they are entertaining themselves. Somewhere.

Cab businesses in D.C., maybe they have tried a radio system, which is really old fashion, maybe 40, 50 years. That doesn't work for this generation. For the new test.

That's what -- that's my argument. So the Industry should change with new fleet of vehicles and innovative drivers. Which is, are the renters. Frankly speaking. I can say that.

So we can compete with unregulated drivers actually invaded the business.

MR. LINDSAY: I have to cut you off.

Two minutes. Thank you for your testimony. If you'd like to submit a written, some written testimony, we'd love to hear your analysis.

MR. AGA: All right.

MR. LINDSAY: But I have to cut you off. Thank you.

MR. AGA: Okay, I'm sorry.

MR. LINDSAY: Next speaker please.

MR. DERESSA: Sinfiayehn Deressa.

MR. LINDSAY: Please begin.

MR. DERESSA: As the Taxicab Commission is getting ready to work under the new structure, the taxicab drivers are also willing to work with brand new wheelchair accessible, fuel efficient and environmental friendly cabs in and out of underserved areas of the cities.

Working with rented taxicabs is like putting on unfitting gloves for the fight. The rental vehicles are very fragile and highly fuel consuming.

Most of the cabs are high mileage or problematic and stay out of service for longer

period of time. That is while they are under repair.

Lots of metal noises, dysfunctional air condition, heater, check engine, air bags, seatbelts and even broken seats. That can cause tremendous health hazards on the drivers.

The new cabs use not even one third of the amount of fuel that cab renters use a day to make same amount of money. If tags are issued for those using renters cabs, we will certainly fuel -- buy fuel economy and hybrid cars.

Even experience in data shows that previous H-tag owners are driving new and compatible cars that are in accordance with the new regulations.

Therefore you, D.C., can keep this lovely former check holder city. That is the most prominent political district in the world and its subsidiaries, smoke-free. Instead of then cab drivers 60 percent of their guys money.

Don't we deserve to have family time since we are working 12 hours every day, seven

days a week to make our living and cover expenses? We seldom spend time with our families.

Why are we enslaved by the group of cab company owners who escalate the rent prices whenever they want? How could one expect good customer service from disgruntle, discourage and abused driver.

Dear, Panel Committees, for someone who lives off selling fish, one --

MR. LINDSAY: Sir --

(Off microphone comments)

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Mr. Deressa, how many taxicab do you have?

MR. DERESSA: Me?

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Yes.

MR. DERESSA: I don't have taxis.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Oh, okay. Pass the mic down please.

MR. DERESSA: Yes, sir.

MR. LINDSAY: Tesema Erkihun? The

name here is, T-E-S-E-M-A?

MS. ADAL: No.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay. So you'll be next. Okay. And your name, ma'am?

MS. ADAL: Azeb, A-Z-E-B.

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, Azeb Adal.

MS. ADAL: Yes.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. I apologize.

MS. ADAL: Yes.

MR. LINDSAY: Yes.

MS. ADAL: Good afternoon. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: Please pull the mic a little closer to you so we can hear.

MS. ADAL: Okay. Good afternoon. And that you for giving me this opportunity.

The first thing is --

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: I can't hear.

MS. ADAL: You can't hear?

MR. LINDSAY: Speak into the microphone please. Loud --

MS. ADAL: Oh, okay.

MR. LINDSAY: -- project. Okay, thanks.

MS. ADAL: Okay. Good afternoon.

MR. LINDSAY: There you go.

MS. ADAL: And thanks, you give me this opportunity. The first thing is, if I don't have a tag -- the problem of I don't have tag.

The first one is the rent. The rent is just too high. I have to work hard, more than 12 hours to pay the rent and to pay my rent.

And the second one is, the car, when I drive it on the highway it's smoking. I have to jump out from the car. If I have a tag I can buy a new car and comfort of the car.

So the belt is not working, the seats not sliding. My backs pain, I have to slide to reach the brake and accelerator.

If I have a tag, for this Commission I ask to have a tag and to be free from this slave. This slave to pay every month, every week $340. It's just too hard. And thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. Thank you,

Panel. I mean thank you witnesses, we appreciate it.

I think there was Tesema Erkihun. Please come up. And if there are any others that would like to speak that have not spoken, please sign in so that we can have -- and we'll record your name and have you testify.

Okay. So it looks Mr. Erkihun is the last witness. Okay, and Royale Simms. Okay. Please, sir, you have, oh, you have three minutes because you registered. Please go.

MR. ERKIHUN: Okay, thank you. Hello everybody. My name is Tesema Erkihun. I would like to say thank you, D.C. Commission.

First of all I want to say one question. Why drivers renting are taken by D.C. Taxi Company?

The DCTC Commission now has our advantage taken by taxicab. I mean, I've been two and a half years in the United States. I've been in three months taxi driver. But if something's happening in our cab, when it goes

to, I mean taxi company, we spend at least one day, two day we be off. At least five, six hours just for minor problem.

The car, which I'm driving, is not just qualities, is not normal. It's -- I know how the DMV certified those cars.

Why -- second, I have a question. Why can't drivers get H-tag directly from DCTC instead of having to go through a taxi company?

We cannot afford that much money. It's not only the money, we spend our time. Why are we to spend my time?

Because I don't have child. If they say, two days, five days be off, I can be off. But that's not the way to make money. To just run a business.

So shall I get H-tag as a taxi driver. Thank you. That's all.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you. We're going to let Mr. Elfadil Khald go. He was already pre-registered.

MR. KHALD: Hi, how are you doing.

Sorry I'm coming late.

MR. LINDSAY: Go ahead.

MR. KHALD: I don't know what we're going to talk about. You know, the whole confirmation.

But the reason -- hello? Yes. Okay, but the reason I need the H-tag, I have a family and I buy a tag from the company.

The guy every time he want me to pay him, you know, for some more money for the tag and the insurance.

The kind of the car I drive is an old car. And I have, you know, if I get the H-tag I can buy new car. If I buy new car I give a good service for the customer. You know, like nice car and good quality. Oh, sorry.

That is going to save gas, change the look for the city, you know. Because everybody that came will see the car is very nice. Is going to be a happy.

And now the money I pay him, at least the money is going to go for my kids and for my

family. And that's why I'm here.

Really we need this H-tag for, to help us and help my family. And also for, you know, for the good for the city. Also for nice car and a good service for the taxi. Taxi service. Yes.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, sir.

MR. KHALD: All right, thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: And I think our last guest is Mr. Royale Simms. You have two minutes to speak. Thank you.

MR. SIMMS: I want to make, thank you, Panel. I want to make two quick points. Royale Simms, Washington, D.C. Taxi Operators Teamsters, Local 922.

The first point I want to make really briefly, as we've submitted previously in the past, the DCTC must restore the rights of drivers who held the status of owner/operators and make them whole.

Drivers followed the rule and they couldn't have prepared for abrupt policy shift without any notice. It's unfair that they were

not able to get their tags and the DCTC should correct the course of the Agency's past mistakes and give those drivers their tags back.

The second thing is something that's come up recently. And it's the ability of drivers with co-titled vehicles to change their companies.

Because of the implementation of the moratorium, DCTC has limited the ability of the DMV to issue H-tags. So a good example of this problem is Auto Ward Inc.

Auto Ward Inc. was a company sold to District Cab Company without any notice to the drivers. Many of those drivers had their vehicles co-titled and registered with the company and the driver.

Prior to the sale of the company, the drivers had an agreement with Auto Ward to pay $35 a week for insurance fees. After the sell, the drivers with co-titled vehicles were subjected to an $50 increase per week in their weekly fees. So not they're paying $85 a week.

District Cab Company justified the fee as a licensed fee for use of the H-tag. Recently they've changed this fee to be called the associated fee for co-titled drivers.

Avoiding the discussing of whether the fee is legitimate or not, the fee itself would not exist if co-titled vehicles, co-titled drivers could change and leave their companies just like every other driver in the Industry. So whether you're a lease driver or you're on the title by yourself, you can leave a company when you're ready to. Co-titled drivers don't have that opportunity.

The DMV is implementing the H-tag moratorium by maintaining a policy that no new H-tags will be issued. They interpret this policy of saying no new H-tags to include replacement H-tags that have to undergo a title change.

Because many drivers are co-titled with companies, in order to stay in compliance, drivers you have to change companies would need to change their title of the vehicle.

Even if a company releases the ownership interest in the title and the new company agrees to change the title, the DMV under the current policy cannot issue H-tag. Even though this transaction is H-tag neutral.

Drivers are effectively stuck with a company that's on their title because any change would invalidate the H-tag.

So we've seen the situations where, you know, the precarious of a company not complying with wheelchair requirements or the taking advantage of drivers by charging them extra fees because the drivers are stuck.

So co-titled drivers should be given the same freedom. To choose a company their associated with. Just like leased drivers and just like individual owners.

And so I think this would be a good step in the DCTC. Boost their morale, showing drivers that they want to lower the cost the drivers face, increase trust in the agency and boost morale to lead to better customer service.

Thank you.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

MR. SIMMS: Oh, I have --

MR. LINDSAY: Written testimony? That would be great. Would anyone else who has not spoken on the record, does anyone else wish to testify? Okay.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: If nobody else wants to testify, we may want to adjourn. Yes, we're going to adjourn for a few minutes. And give you a chance to see if you want to testify. Five minutes break.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 2:05 p.m. and resumed at 2:12 p.m.)

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: The meeting is back in session.

MR. LINDSAY: With no more witnesses testifying, I believe the Chairman can --

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: All right. With no more witnesses be testifying today, there will be an opportunity if you want to testify on

January, I mean July the --

MR. LINDSAY: 30th.

CHAIRPERSON TAPSCOTT: -- 30th, you're willing to sign up to do that. And tell your friends that they can sign up.

So we will have another second hearing. And I appreciate everybody that came out and signed up today. And the ones that didn't sign up or had the hearing.

And so if nobody is to sign up today, this meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matted was concluded at 2:13 p.m.)

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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
+ + + + +
OFFICE OF THE D.C. TAXICAB COMMISSION
+ + + + +
PUBLIC MEETING: PANEL ON INDUSTRY
+ + + + +
THURSDAY
JULY 30, 2015

+ + + + +

The Commission's Panel on Industry met in the DCTC Hearing Room, Suite 2023, 2235 Shannon Place, S.E., Washington, D.C., at 11:00 a.m., Stanley W. Tapscott, Chairman, presiding.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

STANLEY W. TAPSCOTT, Panel Chair, Commissioner
ANTHONY MUHAMMAD, Commissioner
BETTY SMALLS, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT:

MONIQUE BOCOCK, ESQ., Assistant General Counsel
ADAM MINGAL, ESQ., Assistant General Counsel

OFFICE OF TAXICABS STAFF PRESENT:

CHARLES LINDSAY

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(11:15 a.m.)

COMMISSIONER TAPSCOTT: Good morning. I'm sorry for the delay but it was business we had to set up this morning. Good morning. My name is Commissioner Stanley Tapscott. I'm the Chairman of the D.C. Taxicab Commission Panel on Industry.

This is the second and final hearing on the Panel on Industry. With me today are the other members of the panel: Commissioner Anthony Muhammad and Betty Smalls, and Charles Lindsay. Mr. Charles Lindsay is from the Taxicab Commission and we are working with him on this. The Office of Taxicabs.

The time is now 11:15 a.m. and we are in the Public Hearing Room at the D.C. Taxicab Commission, 2235 Shannon Place, S.E.

Earlier this year, the Commission directed the panel to investigate the current limit on taxicab vehicle licenses, commonly referred to as the H-tag moratorium, and to

publish a written report with recommendations to the full Commission concerning the moratorium. To be clear, an H-tag is actually a license provided by the Department of Motor Vehicles when the Commission issues a vehicle license under its own rules.

The panel was directed to thoroughly evaluate all issues concerning the moratorium, which dates from January 2, 2006 to the present. To do this, the panel decide to gather both written and oral comments from the industry, with written comments received first.

The written comments were provided through an H-Tag Information Form, which was made available from May 2nd through June 1st. The form allowed stakeholders to provide basic information about their views on the moratorium, and whether it should be lifted, and, if so, why. The panel received over 1,100 forms from drivers and companies, and has now had an opportunity to review the forms in order to get an accurate sense of stakeholder views in preparation for the

public hearings.

Today's second public hearing is an opportunity for the panel to receive more oral testimony on whether the Commission should lift the moratorium on vehicle licensing, and if so, whether there should be any limits or conditions placed on new licenses.

The panel expects to hear testimony on DCTC's licensing and market conditions affecting the supply and use of taxicabs in the District. We are interested in receiving specific comments, particularly on the likely impacts of changes to the numbers of taxicab licenses, the types of vehicles used, and Wheelchair Access Vehicles.

The panel will take all testimony into consideration, but we all speakers to please be specific in their comments today.

We encourage speakers to avoid repeating what has already been said many times at the Commission's monthly meetings, and in other regular forums.

The panel is well aware of the common

arguments for and against new vehicle licenses, so please try to focus on specific issues, and share with us your most original insights that others have not already provided.

As stated in the Public Notice, registered speakers will have three minutes to speak, and non-registered speakers will have two minutes to speak.

As you can see by the turnout today, we have many people who have registered to speak. Therefore, we will strictly adhere to the aforementioned time limits. We ask that you respect the timeframe so that all in attendance will have the opportunity to testify.

You are free to stay or leave after you testify. However, because the capacity for this room is 91 occupants, we ask that you be considerate and leave, so that those wishing to testify that are standing in the lobby of this facility, can enter this hearing room. We will take a 10 minute recess every hour, which we will announce shortly beforehand.

Finally the record for this hearing will be open through August 13, 2015. If you are unable to testify today, but would like your testimony to be a part of the public record, please email it to poi@dc.gov, no later than August 13, 2015. Thank you.

Thank you. We will now call the first five speakers and operate in that fashion.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Good morning. A little bit of housekeeping. If everybody can turn their cell phones either off or on vibrate, that will be helpful because this hearing is being recorded.

Secondly, as the chairman stated, we have a lot of folk rotating in, so I ask that once you've completed your testimony, that again, I can't require you to leave, but I ask that you be again consideration and leave, so that others can come inside. Okay?

All right. We'll get started. I have a list of 58 pre-registered individuals or companies. They will be called first. After those

58 folk have been called -- and each one of those individuals get three minutes, a company or a group gets five minutes.

After those, the 58 have been called, we have a second sheet that I believe most of you have signed up for, for non-preregistered folk, we will then call you according to the order in which you sign up. Okay? So I ask you to be patient with us and work with us. And I also ask each person, as you come forward, please spell your name, because some of the names are a little difficult, so please spell your name, so that for the record we can have your name spelled correctly. Okay? All right. We can get started.

The first name is Brook Yoseph. Evelyn Ruiz. Jose Medrano. M-e-d-r-a-n-o. No? I'm going to spell your name. A-l-e-m-a-y-e-h-u Yadete. Again I'm going to spell this name. Andargachew Wolde. A-n-d-a-r-g-a-c-h-e-w W-o-l-d-e. Francis Bundu. Berhane Negash. B-e-r-h-a-n-e. Tesfaye Temesgen. Last name T-e-m-e-s-g-e-n. M.S. Cheema. C-h-e-e-m-a. Bhuiyan Mohammedhuda.

Last name M-o-h-a-m-m-e-d-h-u-d-a. Ibrahim Ahmed. Ibrahim Ahmed. Esmail Abadiga. Last name A-b-a-d-i-g-a. Mohammed Mhummed. Mohammed Mhummed. Tesfaye Ephrem. E-p-h-r-e-m.

Last name is Dhaliwal. D-h-a-l-i-w-a-l. Paulos Gossa. Last name, G-o-s-s-a. Safi Abramechu. Last name A-b-a-m-e-c-h-u. Temesgen Mendera. Last name M-e-n-d-e-r-a. Ed Wailes. S-w-a-i-l-e-s.

Gashaw Birbo. Gashaw Birbo. B-i-r-b-o. Saeed Khan. Saaeed Khan. Taera Jirapa. Please have a seat. Yemis Abeboykue. Last name A-d-e-b-o-y-k-u-e. Muhammed Akum. A-k-u-m. Sohail Sajid. S-a-j-id.

Kamran Ibrahim. First name K-a-m-r-a-n I-b-r-a-h-i-m.

Samuel Habtezion. H-a-b-t-e-z-i-o-n. Yokoub Yokoub. Kehinde Aderoju. A-d-e-r-o-j-u. Abdelmagib Bouataoui. B-o-u-a-t-a-o-u-i. All right. There we go. All right. And I apologize if I butchered your name. Please forgive. Okay. Okay. So we're going to start with Brook Yoseph.

And you do have three minutes, and we're going to strictly adhere to that. Okay? You may begin, sir.

MR. YOSEPH: Good afternoon. For the record, my name is Brook, B-r-o-o-k, last name Y-o-s-e-p-h.

Panel, thanks for giving us this opportunity to voice our opinion, and for the record, I would like to make it clear that the comments I'll be making today are solely mine, personal. Even though I've been associated with a different group, I'd like to make that clear.

As far as today's meeting, according to the Notice for Public Hearing, states specifically to focus on the structure under which H-Tag may be distributed and also reasons for lifting the moratorium, so I'd like to focus on those two specific.

Let's start with the structure under which H-Tag may be expanded. With this, I would like to suggest that the H-Tag distribution process must not include any new criterias that

were not previously there when issuing the operator's permit.

As you well note, drivers comprised of a DMV residence, so prioritizing one over the other might be difficult.

Secondly, allow all individual ownership of H-Tag, as long as the owner has established the proper business entity by adding the persons owning the H-Tag. As you well know, the One-Stop Form currently, in its format, only allows for companies and association, and I'm here to say giving individuals the right will also give us the opportunity to own their own cabs.

And following that, to allow individuals to register their vehicles for an H-Tag by adding the wording, individual owner, and providing space for their signature.

And the One-Stop Form, in current format, a driver would have to give his vehicle as well as the rights for the tag to an association or a company, and that is unfair.

And under the structure, again, allow individuals to form companies, and to apply for two or more vehicles as long as the operators are based within the District, and are following everything that is stated within Title 31.

And as far as the circumstance, requirement under which the DCTC should lift the moratorium, number one is licensed taxicab operators must currently possess valid DCTC hack operator license, obviously, and second, DCTC to complete and make available a specific list of approved taxicab vehicles, and all the process be clear for those that are applying for an H-Tag.

In closing, DCTC, and panel members, as you well know, there are many shortcomings with the current format of the District Title 31 regulations governing the taxicab industry. Some of the regulations and amendments that were previously put in to place do not take into account the current circumstances affecting the distribution of taxicab industry, and is specific how the operating developments in computer

hardware, software, as well as phone apps, in conjunction with the moratorium on H-Tag has created an imbalance and unfair disadvantage to operators without an individual H-Tag.

Therefore, it's in the city's best interest for the Taxicab Commission to reinstate the open entry system, and let the market decide the equilibrium. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Please, no applause. We've got to get through this. All right? I get it. Thanks.

Ms. Evelyn Ruiz. And by the way, if you have testimony, we'd really like a copy of your testimony. You may begin Ms. Ruiz.

MS. RUIZ: Good morning to the Commission and to all the attendees. My name is Evelyn Ruiz. I am the manager of Classic Cab Association. I am here today to voice my humble opinion on the issuance of more H-Tags.

H-Tags should be issued with control and priority. First prior, companies and owners own H-Tag with existing PVIN. Second priority,

owners and operations that got PVIN, and returned their tags because they cancelled their insurance.

Third priority. Companies and owner-operators that want to invest on wheelchair-accessible v vehicles.

Fourth priority. Driver that got their pays in the year 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, that physically and presently reside in Washington, D.C.

These drivers had been waiting for too long. I strongly believe the five instant drivers need not be issued an H-Tag at this time. On the hearing conducted July 23rd, 2015, I heard some testimonies from drivers, that they turn in their tags in the years 2009, 2010, and 11. They told us some of their stories, but I think they are just stories.

Here is the scenario at the Union Station cab line today. Rental drivers and owner-operators taxicabs, waiting time for passenger is about between 35 to an hour.

Imagine how long will it takes if we do not control the number of taxicabs. I agree. Uber number is uncontrollable, but they do not have a problem because they do not fall in line. They are not being watched by any police of DCTC inspectors. They park in front of hotels or anywhere. They can load and unload, and stop anywhere they want. Law and order does not apply to them.

Adding more cabs is not a solution to fight Uber. We need an app and technology like Uber. We need to discipline ourselves by paying our taxicab insurance, even we go for a month vacation. We cannot just cancel insurance and turn in the tags, expecting the DCTC and DMV to give him, or her, another one after three months.

Lastly, I would like to request again the reactivation of my two H-Tags, which I continued paying the insurance on them until the license plates expired in February 2014.

Let me just point out that I am not asking for new H-Tags. I have these tags with

PVIN in my possession. I just need them to be recommissioned. Thank you for listening and have a wonderful day.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

Mr. Alemayehu Yadete. You may begin, sir. Go ahead. Spell your name, please, so that - for the record.

MR. JIRAT: Yes. My name is Tara Jirat. I'm the cab driver.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Can you spell your name.

MR. JIRAT: T-a-r-a. Last name is J-i-r-a-t. Jirat.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay.

MR. JIRAT: Okay. So first of all, thank you so much for giving for these chances to, for discussing about H-Tag. I'm the cab driver from a cab company almost for one year. So the car is - if you see the car, just you are surprised. The car is almost, it is like - it's - is very old car, like 2004. It is not for - it is not for service. The car is - totally, it

is too much - it is already - it is - the car is too old - the car. It is now got sometimes the airbag is coming out, sometimes the, the AC's not working. So any time I take the customer, the customer complain for me. Sometime police officer give me a ticket. This is because of the company, company not giving a good car or the new car for the driver. All drivers are just get, get accident on the highway because of companies not giving a right car for the driver.

So both driver and the customers are always - just they are battling on the highway and the other part of the cities. This is one big problem for drivers, other customers. So the car they give for us take too much gas. Just all - for example, sometimes I make like $50 in a day, but I pay for the gas, like $100. So always just I'm, I'm working like negative. I don't work nothing for myself.

Sometimes when, at the end of the month, I go to borrow money from my drivers, from other drivers, because I don't make any monies,

because - because of the car is not good. The car have - the car takes too much gas. I pay for gas. Sometimes, I pay for my ticket. Police officer give me a ticket because of air bag, and the other part of the vehicle is not operating very nice.

This is a big problem. So when I go to talk to my company about the car, the company is not treating to me. Instead of fixing the car, just as they running to me, to me. Like this car is very nice, this car is okay - go to work. So when I go to work, police officer give me a ticket. So the companies, still they are not treating drivers. We have a big problem, big, and a big problem. So I would like to say thank you for much for giving this chance for us to discussing each other.

So another one is only if you - only if you -- owners, the new company --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: I hate to cut you off but that's three minutes.

MR. JIRAT: Yes.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thanks. We have to move to the next gentleman here.

Please spell your name for the record, sir.

MR. YAAKOUP: my name is Yaakoup, Y-a-a-k-o-u-p. My first name. My last name is Yaakoup. Yaakoup Yaakoup. Yaakoup. Y-a-a-k-o-u-p. Well, my story is like five years ago, I go back home in 2010, I go back, and like every time I do, I take it to the DC - to the DC - take the tag number back, and then come back and take it back. This time I come back, they said no, we cannot really give you - you have to go to DCTC. Other way, you cannot have it.

Now I come in to DCTC in two thousand and - it started in 2013, where - where Evelyn Johnson, she let me buy a car. After I buy a car, I put them in the car, and then I come back, two-three week. She left those. Now I, I don't know what I do. So I just go in again, again, again, again.

So I go to the - I have to -- I have

all these people here to promise me to give me this, give me that, give me that. Go buy a car. Go buy this. I can never have it. Then I go rent a car. I cannot rent a car for $300, and I am 70 years old. I cannot work. I try, every time I come here and talk to somebody, give me a cut, you know, and nobody helping me. And I just want to know what I do. Right to date, somebody will tell me - please, what I do - do I have a tag number, or I just to sit down home and be homeless? One of these two things. I can have a tag number, please. Or I will be homeless. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

Kahinde Attaraju. Is that your name?

MR. BOUATAOUI: : Excuse me, sir.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Is that your name? Mr. Ka --

MR. BOUATAOUI: Abdelmjid Bouataoui.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay. Please spell your name for the record.

MR. BOUATAOUI: Yes. It's A-b-d-e-l-m-

j-i-d. The last name is B-o-u-a-t-a-o-u-i.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

MR. BOUATAOUI: Good afternoon, gentlemen, and ladies. Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity to express our opinion about this matter.

We are really, as drivers, as cab drivers, we are struggling too much about this weekly stand fee, which is too high for us, because with the Uber competition and outside cars, 300 a week, it's too much for us. And then also the cars, they are not in good shape, they give us, like car that consume too much gas.

I have to pay like $60 a day, plus 300. We don't have that much time to spend with our family. You know, we have family, we have children, we have to spend time and with - we should spend some time with them.

And it happens to me now, the drivers, the number of drivers now in the, in the business is, is it's too many compared to the H-Tags. Now before I was looking for a job, it took me

like two months to find a job. So it was not easy.

And then when I talked to the company about this matter, like a week, they said if you want it, it's okay -- if you don't want, you can leave. Somebody else, we'll find somebody else to come work.

So we talk about this. Thank you very much

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. Okay. We'll continue down the list. Thank you. Thank you all for testifying. The next name on the list is George Akinkugbe. A-k-i-n-k-u-g-b-e.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Omi Omikunle. Umi Omikunle. Last name O-m-i-k-u-n-l-e.

Is that you, sir? Okay. Please.

Mohammad Esghar.

(Pause)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: I apologize. Mohammed E-s-g-h-a-r.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Mohammad Khan. K-h-a-n.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Olasoji Olaniyi. O-l-a-n-i-y-i.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Tegen Desta. Last name D-e-s-t-a.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Tesfaye Gebru. B-e-g-r-u. Is that you, sir? Okay.

Tesfay Woldu. W-o-l-d-e. I mean d-u.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Raj Wali Khan. Raj Wali Khan.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Shiraz Khan. S-h-i-r-a-z Khan.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Gashaw Birbo. G-a-s-h-a-w B-i-r-b-o.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Omar Jarmouni. J-a-r-m-o-u-n-i.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Nathan Price.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Chris Mills.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Arthur Lennon. Please, sir.

Pete Harmon. Please, sir.

Hassan Hahmed. H-a-h-m-e-d.

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Mangistu Abebe. A-b-e-b-e. Mangistu Hamonout. H-a-m-o-n-o-u-t. Harold Novick. Harold Novick. Is that you, sir? Please. Yes. Okay. That's our five. So let's see who we'll start with. Okay. As I asked the last panel, please spell your name. Can you gentlemen pass down the microphone right here. Sir, can you pass the microphone down. Thank you. All right.

Okay. And I'll set the timer here.

You ready? Okay. We can begin.

MR. AKINKUGBE: My full name is Olaseha George Akinkugbe.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Can you spell it, please.

MR. AKINKUGBE: First name is O-l-a-s-e-h-a. George. G-e-o-r-g-e. Last name A-k-i-n-k-u-g-b-e.

DCTC, Shannon Place, Washington, D.C. Sir, Submission of valid reasons for the reinstatement of H-Tags to all taxicab drivers. I humbly and respectfully state on the, on the list problems to be considered.

One. Double standard is never created in any industry, worldwide. The DCTC has created two standards by allow some drivers to own a cab while other drivers are enslaved to cab companies, who hire us at exorbitant prices. That's why the evolution of some competitors like Uber, Lyft, and so on.

Two. There is a secret of income on the side of DCTC. The revenue to be generated by

DCTC from H-Tag, from registration, inspection, from new drivers, are grossly and negligently diverted to cab companies, because more new drivers will buy more cars than the cab companies. We cannot cope with their -- a month for cabs.

Three. Other competitors. Other competitor drivers such as Uber, Lyft, and so on, own their own car. Why is DCTC drivers are treated differently? I submitted for your perusal and reconsideration of the issue. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

The second person was - please. sir. Yes. The gentleman right here. And you may begin. Thanks

MR. GEBRU: My name is Tesfaye Gebru. My remarks in the - or opinion on the structure of H-Tag license should be expanded to the pre-existing companies, and senior drivers, without any specific requirements.

Those companies and individuals have been

fulfilled the requirements and were operational prior to the moratorium. The new application of an H-Tag license should be allowed to fill the gap opened, opening, or shortage or drivers based on seniority. And with regard, the fuel-efficient cars can only be achieved in the fleet by federal or city grant, or create - creative financing. The only requirements that should be done by the -- and own - the seniority basis. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

Arthur Lennon, I believe is next.

MR. LENNON: Arthur Lennon. L-e-n-n-o-n.

The effect of adding more H-Tags to the present system will be completely devastating to the lives and income of a lot of cab drivers. First of all, there are already too many taxis in Washington, D.C. The industry is over-saturated, in my opinion, as it is.

Of the possible 7,000 taxis that there are, there are probably more than 2,000 too many.

I work at night, mostly, and all I see driving up and down Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues are empty cabs and occupied Ubers. Adding more H-Tags would make it more difficult for me to make a living. If I work in the daytime, it's the same situation. It's a dog eat dog situation among some cab drivers.

Some of the newer cab drivers, who can't own their own cabs, have found out that it is very difficult to have to pay over 300 bucks a week to rent a cab.

Some have quit driving cab and found other jobs. The bill of goods that they were sold by someone has not turned out to be true.

The competition for passengers in D.C. is very severe, so much so that companies such as Uber, Lyft, and the Circulator bus, have taken away most of our business.

For instance, two weeks ago, Saturday, July 18, I sat on the cab stand at the Omni Shoreham Hotel from 7:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. In that interim, six Ubers came up and picked up six

different fares. After five - after 45 minutes, I picked up one passenger going to Dupont Circle for less than ten dollars. I decided not to go back to the hotel stand but to hit the streets. I did that for an hour. I picked up no one, and then I decided to stop wasting my gas, and I went home on a Saturday night, the busiest night of the week.

I only average about two to eight trips per day. That were not the case two years ago, when I averaged over ten trips per day. I am not an exception in this regard, for I've spoken to many cab drivers and they tell me the same thing.

I know of some drivers who are on the verge of losing their homes and are on food stamps.

One solution, in my opinion, is to have a waiting list for drivers who want to have an H-Tag, and when a driver retires, loses his license, or passes away, that tag will be available to the next person. Personally, as you

see, I'm handicapped, and I use my taxi income to supplement my SSI, Social Security. If I can't work in my cab, I might move back to North Carolina where I can afford to live.

And just one last thing. About a year ago, I picked up Mr. Ronald Linton from the Omni Shoreham Hotel, and took him to his apartment at 38th and Macomb, and we had a discussion. At that time, he told me, in his opinion, he felt that there were too many cabs. We need about half of what we had already. He also said that he was trying to put apps in all D.C. cabs to contend with H-Tags. Well, Mr. Linton is gone now, but I'm just saying, in finishing, God rest his soul. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Pete Harman, I believe is next.

MR. HARMAN: Yes. Peter Harman. H-a-r-m-a-n.

I've been a driver and owner for over 20 years, and I find it very ironic, that the D.C. City Council, that agonized so much over

Wal-Mart coming in to D.C. and paying substandard wages, would deliberately impoverish thousands of cab drivers, pushing us in to sub-minimum wage condition. Our only - and allowing Uber, who pays their drivers about the same - an Uber drive who makes a third as much for doing the same amount of business that I do. After his expenses, he makes about half as much gross.

Basically, you're converting us from lower middle class income to working poor. And it's a deliberate policy, because before, nobody had their hand in our pocket. By allowing Uber in, where they take a 25 percent commission, and allow - and pushing - bringing all these new drivers in, they want to push us private owners out of business. We get thousand dollar fines for very trivial offenses. We get our cab impounded for check engine lights on. It's a deliberate attempt to put us out of business. I'm sure you're aware of this, because you're probably part of it.

Right now, there are 6- to 7,000 cabs

in D.C., which is the highest ratio of any city to residents. There's about ten, ten cabs per thousand people. The average in America is one-and-a-half per thousand. An app like Uber, or Lyft, you know, where there's not enough cabs, that makes sense.

Uber could have signed up thousands of cab drivers. You have the best cab service in the country. We are not allowed to compete with Uber. We have to have our cars inspected. We cannot - for example, I have a friend of mine, he developed an app. We're talking about setting up, so we would meet or beat Uber's price within the city all the time.

However, we cannot discount our fares with the credit card system that we have, because we get a thousand dollar fine if we use another credit card system.

We could easily beat Uber just on price. The only two reasons people use Uber is the price, and the advantage of a telephone app.

Now when I became a cab driver 20

years ago, I had to take an extremely difficult test. Only 7 percent of the people passed it on the first try. I passed it on the first try because I'd already been driving a cab in Virginia for eight years, and I'd been a bicycle messenger for 10 years. So I knew the city like the back of my hand. Still a very difficult test; but enabled you to own a cab.

Now the test has such difficult questions on it as: What body of water does the 14th Street Bridge cross? What's the address of the White House? Twenty years ago, I had guys in my cab who are college professors now, and lawyers, who said they tried to pass the test when they were undergraduates. They couldn't do it. It's very difficult, it was very difficult; but it enabled you to own your own cab.

Now when I - my cab was in an accident, I forget how many years ago, I got T-boned by a Veola cab, Sun Tech Cab of Montgomery County, I paid the insurance on my cab for two year -- almost two years, to keep my tags,

because I knew that once I lost my tags, you guys would keep them.

And so basically, the fact that we had to go through so much, and - well, basically, the problem is if you have licensed drivers within five days, and they don't have any knowledge of the city --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Mr. --

MR. HARMAN: - they're going to end up being as bad drivers as Uber drivers who don't know anything --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Those three minutes. I've let you go a little bit. I really appreciate it.

MR. HARMAN: Yes; okay.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: And, you know, for folk who have gone over, if you have written testimony, the record is open until August 13th, and we encourage you to get your testimony to us for the record

MR. HARMAN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay. Thank you

so much. That's it for this panel. Thank you, gentleman. I'm apologize. Harold Novick.

MR. NOVICK: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Please forgive me, sir. Yes. You can begin, Mr. Novick.

MR. NOVICK: Thank you. Would you like me to deliver my comments to you now or --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: You can deliver them to us now if you have them. I'll stop the clock.

MR. NOVICK: Thank you, Mr. Muhammad.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

If you have pre-registered, you called or emailed, please let us know so that we can get you in prior to the non - folk who did not register. You can begin whenever you like, sir.

MR. NOVICK: Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you very much for having this hearing, and audience. My name is Harold Novick. N-o-v-i-c-k. I'm a lawyer admitted to Washington, D.C., and I'm representing LouLou TemTem before this hearing.

I've come to talk about two different things. One is the structure of the licenses and the H-Tags, and the other is the taxicab driver requirements.

Number one. This city is a wonderful city. It's a city that gets a lot of its revenue from tourists. Tourists come usually without cars. They need transportation. They need qualified transportation that is safe and assured. There are, and have been a lot of press about people being assaulted by taxicabs in the past, recently. It is this type of driver that DCTC ensures that we have. My position, our position on the current tag number is that they should be kept constant, but as they diminish because of death, or people leaving, they should be awarded to other people in line.

It is important that people be able to make a living, as you've heard testimony before. Today, they may have $15 an hour, if that much. From that comes many, many, many expenses. Many of them are good. Some of them unnecessary. But

they're in competition with people that don't have these expenses.

I suggest that DCTC set up a Commission, and have a study as to income, as to cost, how to keep the drivers in line with insurance and education, and then decide, at that time, about the limits on the H-tags.

Right now, as you've heard, there's too many tags, too many drivers, and not enough competition, not - I'm sorry - not enough fares with the competition of Uber and others.

Second of all, many of the drivers are out-of-state drivers. There is a City Council ordinance that talks about what out-of-state drivers have to do to get a license. But some of those are inane, and are not really of value. I would submit, and suggest, that DCTC, as they have in the past, represent the taxicab drivers, and try to petition the City Council to make it easier for out-of-state drivers.

Most of the drivers here are out of state. They come here for a living. They come

here because they love the city. I think that in order to keep the quality up high, to keep those drivers that are regulated by you, by DCTC in line, that you have to limit it, and you have to take care of them. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. Thank you for your testimony. I thank the entire panel for your testimony. Thank you.

I'm going to go back a little bit. Thanks. You gentlemen can leave. Thanks. And again, I can't require you to leave but I ask that you exit, so that others that are perhaps in the hall, or in the lobby area, could come in and testify. Thank you.

I was told that Mr. Nathan Price is here. If so, please come to the table. Ermias Biz B-i-z-u-n-e-h. Negussie Dinkte. Samuel Tesfamicael. T-e-s-f-a-m-i-c-a-e-l. Tafera Mussie. M-u-s-s-i-e. Dekele Kessa. K-e-s-s-a. Mr. Royale Simms. Okay. And Vince Gordon. Okay.

So I am going to go back over this

list, real quick, to see if someone who was pre-registered has come in. It's going to be very quick. Okay.

So Jose Medrano. Last name W-o-l-d-e. Last name, B-u-n-d-u. Last name, N-e-g-a-s-h. Last name, T-e-m-e-s-g-e-n. Last name Cheema. Mohammed Huta. Ibrahim Ahmed. Last name, A-b-a-d-i-g-a. Mohammed Mhummed. Tesfaye Ephrem. Last name Dhaliwal. D-h-a-l-i-w-a-l. Last name Gossa. Last name Abamechu. A-b-a-m-e-c-h-u. Last name Mendera. Last name Swailes. S-w-a-i-l-e-s. Last name Birbo. Last name Khan,. Saeed Khan. Yemis Adeboykue. A-d-e-b-o-y-k-u. Last name Akum, A-k-u-m. Last name Sajidm S-a-j-id. Kamran Ibrahim. Samuel H-a-b-t-e-z-i-o-n. Kehinde Aderoju. Falese Akintoye. Last name, E-s-g-h-a-r. Mohammad Kahn. Olasoji Olaniyi. O-l-a-n-i-y-i. Tegen Desta. Tesfay Woldu. Raj Khan. Shiraz Khan. Gashaw Birbo. Omar Marjouni. J-a-r-m-o-u-n-i. Chris Mills. Hassan Hahmed. Last name Abebe, A-b-e-b-e. last name H-a-m-o-n-o-u-t. Please bring him in. I did call him. If he's here, he can - Tyasimi

Audiobuku. Yes, please. I'm still going. Last name B-i-z-u-n-e-h. Last name D-i-n-k-t-e-a. Last name T-e-s-f-a-m-i-c-a-e-l. Last name M-u-s-s-i-e. Last name K-e-s-s-a. Royale Simms. And Vince Gordon.

Were you gentlemen's names called?

(Off mic comments)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Yes. Please have a seat. Okay. So after this panel, we're going to take a ten minute break, and then all the folk who had not previously pre-registered but signed in to testify, we're going to get to you guys. Okay? So these are the people who pre-registered. We can begin. Mr. Nathan Price. And you guys have three minutes.

MR. PRICE: Good morning. My name is Nathan Price. I've been driving a taxicab in the District for 43 years. During the first, I guess 12 or 13 years of my driving a cab, the Taxicab Commission was formed out of legislation of a Taxicab Act in 1985. But as I look around the room, and I see all these drivers fighting to

join the industry, I really wonder why.

In the first place, the industry has become something that was not only a service industry. You have an industry of great importance, the historical, for freed slaves before the Civil War, for immigrants coming from Europe at the turn of the 20th Century, and later on, for immigrants coming from all over the world.

When I first started driving, it was a fun thing to do. It was part time. It was a lot of fun.

Now the industry has become somewhat different since the Taxicab Act in 1985. It's become more of a predatory industry. These drivers struggle to make a living. At the same time, you have the City Council that has given a blanket rein to Uber and other services to come in, and take their business.

The last time the D.C. government did a study on taxicab was June of 1990, and that was the Office of - I think it was something like

Productive Management, something like that. But it was - and the only time the Taxicab Commission licensed a study, I believe it was in the mid 90s, and Jones, with Sharon Pratt Kelly, gave a company out of Canada a chance to do a study. Since then, we have been besieged, for almost 30 years, asan industry, with a non-regulator at its helm, because the most important thing for the industry is, first, to determine how many cabs are needed to deliver services, and how those services are meted out.

Title 31, which was the bible of all taxicab drivers. They carried it around, like a lot of people carry their bibles around. That was a quarter-inch thick - if that. Now that same instrument is about a foot and a half. Impossible to carry around.

Drivers are being blamed for everything from criminal acts, to just completely being idiots. The test has been dummied down, and I can't see where we're going anywhere. Anyway, I will get you a complete testimony because I've

just came back in town from vacation by the 13th of August, and I wish you luck in trying to do what you have to do. And I'd like to say hello to Ms. Smalls and Mr. Tapscott.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Yemis Adeboykue.

MR. ADEBOYKUE: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Yes. Please begin.

MR. ADEBOYKUE: Good afternoon. My name is Yemisi Adeboykue. I have been driving taxicab for 43 years. September 1972. I'm sorry. June 1972. A few years ago, I was sick. I had stroke. Dropped my tags. When I came back, I was told I cannot have my tags anymore. This is, to me, very absurd. Can somebody lose his benefits? I'm asking, gentlemen, this, of good nature. Can you lose your benefits because you are sick? I lost my benefits, of not having tags because I was sick.

Washington, D.C. had a culture of allowing licensed cab drivers to own their cabs.

You took that culture away from us, so we can be working for cab companies who, in turn, hike up their cab rentals every week. This is slavery and oppression on part of drivers who rent cars because they cannot own, they cannot allow - they are not allowed to own their own vehicles.

Some cab drivers own their own tags. Some cannot. This is absurd. Everybody driving cabs should be allowed, regardless whether you are a new cab driver who joined yesterday, should be allowed to have their own H-tags.

If this is not allowed, I believe this is unfair and ungodly. Uber killed us. Are you bury us or them? There's no valid reason to take this culture away from us. I believe that any cab driver who wants to own their own cab should be allowed to do so, why some other who are already enjoying that privilege.

Gentlemen, I will say God bless you as you are listening to us. We are suffering. With us today, 200. Next week, 300. This is slavery. We beg you to reconsider this. God bless you.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Can you pass the microphone down, please. Thank you. Please spell your name for the record.

MR. OLASOJI: My name is Olaniyi Olasoji.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Please spell it.

MR. OLASOJI: O-l-a-n-i-y-i. Olasoji. O-l-a-s-o-j-i.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

MR. OLASOJI: Yes, sir. Thank you so much again, the panel, for this opportunity for second time. I came two weeks ago, and this is just a recap of what I said two weeks ago here.

There's no more to be said. We just need something to be done on time. Like I said, just a recap. It will bring in so many good things to DCTC, to the entire Washington, D.C. Firstly, 2008, we bring innovation, and challenges in to the system, as they allow Uber to have the - because of weak specification that were made by their boss, to have, maybe from 2008

and upward, driving cars.

We spend, we like to have confidence, everybody back on there. We all know that. You may not. I'm tired, you want to relax and go home. Not with our cars. With trucks. You know, sometimes your brake is making noise. Even with the seats. I mean, we drive cab, so we know what we're facing.

The companies just give you because you don't have no choice. You have to pay your rent. You have to pay your bill. So whatever they give you is what you take. That's what it is. If you allow us to have our own tag, innovation will come in, and the system will change. People will be happy.

Secondly, between confidence, only customers. If I go from here to New York, they don't have anything to fear. Maybe your car will break down. Your car is good, it's brand new, it's okay. So where we're going, they realize, because they have confidence, the way you got on the road.

Number three. There are the freedom of choice. Not everybody will have the money go and buy a brand new car, but for the people that are ready to do that, pay for the H-tag, buy their brand new cars, allow them to do so.

They don't have the money should go back to the company and number four. If we encourage our drivers that already being lost to Uber --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: I have to cut you off. Your three minutes is up. I've actually let you go over.

MR. OLASOJI: Oh, thank you so much. God bless you.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: When I do this, wrap it up a little bit. Okay? Just try. All right. Ready? Please spell your name for the record, sir.

MR. FALESE: Akintoye Falese.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Can you please spell it.

MR. FALESE: First name is A-k-i-n-t-

o-y-e. The last name is F-a-l-e-s-e.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD:

MR. FALESE: Thank you. I want to thank this panel for giving me the opportunity again to speak out, and to say my mind, to I guess press the kind of situation which the taxi driver facing. Some of the company that we rent cab from, they provide the services but on an absolute cost. We don't have no choice we have to pay. We have to go by them.

But I want to appeal to this panel to consider us, irrespective of the year that we've been driving, in as much as we are being certified by DCTC. We are the face - I mean, the licensed, drive cab, and to make choice of having H-tag should be considered.

That will bring good effectiveness in this business. We have opportunity to get a cab of our choice, of wish that is, you know, that we are going to put up to complete - compete reasonably in the market, going by the deregulation that has been in the system. The

Uber and the solo, you know. That will bring effectiveness, confidence, and courage to the drivers, and to the consumers. Confidency - the right with confidence, because they are paying for the service. So if this panel consider us, it will be a very good thing to promote our business, to promote us, and to like take us out of this bonded that we are in, because we have to pay some particular amount every week, 250 every week to a cab company, and riding in an obsolete car, which we don't even like make out there. Sometime we have to, we have to like burn our ass out, because we have to pay. If you don't pay, then you, you can't ride. Go God bless you as you consider us. Amen.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

Thank you, sir. Please spell your name.

MR. WOLDU: Last name Woldu, or l-d-u. First name Tesfay. This is second panel, summary or testimony we've given. In our opinion, the structure of the H-T tag license should be

lifted, and the moratorium of H-Tags, to be expanded to all qualified, without any specific requirements. The only requirement should be qualification in adding new technology and services to meet the demand.

This will give the public choices, and competitive on-demand services that will have benefits in service and cost for the citizens of Washington, D.C.

Any excess, overage, saturation, will be corrected by the market in a short period of time. In addition, we strongly suggest the D.C. Taxi Commission, as much time they're wasting or talking about this kind of panel, should be talking about the so-called demand service companies - Uber, Lyft, and all that kind of stuff. They should be regulated, and go through the same spectrum that everybody else is going through.

It is not fair to have a moratorium, and asking what the people would like to do. Let the market dictate what needs to be done. As

simple as that. Let's not waste time and energy, and that's our opinion.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir. Thank you. As stated, we're going to take a five to ten minute break, I think everyone can use a small break, and when we come back, I am going to go down the list of non-preregistered voters, and each of you have - you have two minutes. Okay? Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 12:21 p.m. and resumed at 12:40 p.m.)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Hello. The meeting is back in session. Can you guys please, and ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats, so we can get started. All right.

So I know I mentioned earlier that we were going to go, start from the list of individuals who had not previously registered. However, there were about four or five folk who actually pre-registered, that I spoke to, that I'm going to call up, and they get three minutes.

The difference between pre-registered, and non, and Boku did not pre-register, is one minute. Boku pre-registered, gets three minutes. Boku didn't register, gets two minutes. Okay. So let's begin. Mr. Oluwuasfeni Omikunle. Vince Gordon. Biz - B-i-z-u-a-y-e-h-u Hamout?

MR. HAMOUT: Hamout.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir. And Mr. Massoud. Each of you have three minutes apiece, and now I'm going to ask a question. Is there anyone else who pre-regi - oh. Ed Swailes. Please. Thank you, sir. I almost forgot. Thank you. Please have a seat. Yes. Is there anyone else in this room that pre-registered? You called me, you emailed me, you emailed to the P.O. address, that I have not called?

(No response)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay. Great. Okay. So this is the last panel of folk who have three minutes apiece, and we can begin.

MR. OMIKUNLE: Good afternoon. My name is Oluwuasfeni Omikunle. Thank you for

giving us this opportunity of speaking in presence of you, sir.

My opinion is straight to, for all my colleagues, they are spoke before, and they spoke correct. How we can get a tag, is good for a business outside there to get - a good driver as we have been trained. We go through the training, go to class of giving our customer the way we address the customer, the way we treat the customer. After we give, we are -- and getting a car, the rent. For me, I spend more than eight weeks of getting a car, after I get ID. After I get ID, I spend on that eight weeks of repair a car. The car rents for 250 per week. And for me, I need to work before I can get, get $20, because of competition outside, Uber, Lyft, and all that.

So my opinion is if we get a tag, at least maybe the cab driver, or my colleague, they can buy a new car, confidence with driver, the customer. So we can compete with Uber. Because right now we work hard. Sometimes, one of colleague, they went to the hotel, to sleep

there. So a lot of the - we do all we can do to get, to take of family. So we - I appeal to the panel, if you can issue a tag for us we can get a new car. We can get at least minimum of 1999 up to date. So that's my opinion. Thanks so much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir. Thank you for staying within time. Thank you. Next. Please.

MR. GORDON: Hello. My name is Vincent Gordon.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

MR. GORDON: I've been driving a taxicab in Washington, D.C. since 1988. I've raised my family, bought my home in the District, all while working either part time or full time as a cab driver. Currently, I live with cancer, and am a compensated veteran, who is rated permanently and totally disabled. My disability ended my 24-year career as a finishing carpenter and a project manager for a company that built restaurants in the Metropolitan Washington Area.

Fortunately, for me, working as a cab

driver supplements my income. Personally, I'm hoping that the issuance of Ace Tag will ensure that my lifetime commitment as a cab driver would be secure. I like to think I've operated in the industry like a responsible small business and contributed my service as a star ambassador, most visitors encounter when they come to the nation's capital.

With the ability to acquire Ace Tag, I realized, I can realize the possibility of participating in the Wheelchair Accessible Program. I've invested, the last seven years, trying to develop a working knowledge of the wheelchair accessible industry. As an operator of a wheelchair van, that is a taxicab, I'm familiar with the task of maintaining that type of vehicle.

Secondly, as a D.C. business owner, I had, in 2009-2010, coupled with a District cab company, and offered several contracts, several bids and contract proposals to operate as a Metro Access paratransit contractor. While proposing

those endeavors, I established invaluable relationships with Metro Access, along with a thorough understanding of the American Disability Act requirements.

I've also developed contacts with companies like Mobility Works, a wheelchair van conversion company, and also registered our company to attend Federal Transportation Department paratransit instructor seminar that's conducted locally, so we would have properly-trained drivers we were to hire.

Froman industry point of view, I believe that the issuance of a limited amount of personal or company Ace Tag, with restrictions in place, would ensure the availability of a continued workforce that will allow the industry to address inadequacies that can enhance taxicab ridership. Lastly, as a driver that worked as an office manager assistant with Imperial Cab Company, and now doing special projects with Dial Cab, I can see where the issuance of Ace Tags will allow some companies to recapture the

financial burden mandated by some of the requirements that will come with the changes that's needed for the taxicab industry to remain a dominant force in Washington transportation.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. When I wave my phone, that just means you have about 10 or 15 seconds. Thank you for adhering to the time. I appreciate it. Next up, please, and pronounce your name.

MR. BIZUAYEHU: Thank you very much. My name is Haim Bizuayehu. First name, H-a-i-m, Last name B--i-z-u-a-y-e-h-u. Thank you for this opportunity, and I will start by just asking a question, everybody in this room, including the panel, and my fellow cab drivers.

I think there is in the regulation, Title 31, which was essentially passed or adopted here by this Commission, there is an age requirement for the taxicab vehicles. And I just want to know that - if that's still active or not. I have a reason why I ask this question and I'll come back to it. Let me start by saying

this. I think many of us in the street - I mean, as a cab driver, I drive like 14 or 15 hours a day, and my cab, fellow cab drivers also do the same thing. And probably you, the pa -- people in the panel, my flag is car taxicab on the streets of Washington, D.C. And when you raise your hand, you can see how many taxicabs convert to pick you up. That shows how the market is saturated.

Especially with images of these companies, Uber and Lyft, and Sidecar. With Uber only by itself, about 14,000 drivers in Washington, D.C. You can imagine how the market is, how the drivers already on the system struggling to make their living.

Then I posed a question when I, last time in my testimony for this. I heard many of the cab drivers in here, my fellow cab drivers, testify that if H-tags issued, that we can bring in new vehicles. I think it is a requirement, starting 2017, that each and every driver in Washington, including taxicab companies to bring new vehicles as a requirement. So Washington,

D.C. taxicab vehicles, starting from 2017, should be a minimum of five to seven years old, I think to bring in to the five years old, and to retire, seven years old. So relatively, we're going to have newer vehicles ,including rental. So those people who are driving rental vehicles, they're going to start in a newer vehicle. So that shouldn't be the only justification to convince this panel or the Taxicab Commission for issuing new H-Tags. Instead, H-Tags - I'm not opposing issuing H-Tags. But first, a proper study has to be done.

I think that, as I mentioned in my testimony about two weeks ago, the 1985 Taxicab Commission establishment, that also required that the Commission to do a study, a comprehensive study, I believe two years, every two years, and it was that issue tags depending on the demand and supply.

But let me wrap up. So he told me to wrap up. So but after saying that, I want to mention two things, very critical things. One,

those drivers who has lost their vehicle tags, because it has been the long practice of this Commission, this Taxicab Commission, and DMV, for those drivers to turn in their vehicles and reissue to them after they bring their new vehicles or come back from vacation. That suddenly stopped. So there are many drivers who lost their tags because of that. That is not fair. They should be reissued to them, and also - I mean, if I were them - I'm not giving bad advice - they can go to court and sue this Commission, because you take the tag without any advance notice.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

MR. BIZUAYEHU: For 2006, because I don't want to be --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. Thank you.

MR. BIZUAYEHU: For 2,000 drivers. Just one second can I get?

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. Thank you.

MR. BIZUAYEHU: Okay.
COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Mr. Massoud.
MR. MEDGHALCHI: Thank you.
COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Please spell your name for the record.
MR. MEDGHALCHI: Massoud Medghalchi. Thank you for the opportunity to testify again before this panel, as I've done many times before.
CHAIRMAN TAPSCOTT: Would you spell your name for the record.
MR. MEDGHALCHI: M-a-s-s-o-u-d. Last name is M-e-d-g-h-a-l-c-h-i.
CHAIRMAN TAPSCOTT: Thank you very much.
COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: And I'll give you another five seconds.
MR. MEDGHALCHI: D.C. taxi industry has been subject of whims of several interest groups in the past, none of which have ever had, or acted in the interests of the majority of the comprising members, namely, the owner-operators,

who, by the way, comprise over 70 percent of the industry.
I will mention some of these. Number one. An unfair rate structure under which a ride across town in the early 80s was 25 cents more than a bus ride, so federal workers and the Congress would not inconvenienced or stressed financially.
Two. Legislature pretending to create jobs, which would be D.C. legislature.
Number Three. DCTC acting inappropriately by peddling illegal licenses, created an oversaturated and hostile environment for the cab drivers. This was an unfair playing field for drivers and company owners.
This created a financially unprofitable industry, which has, and cannot recover from. Now we are considering even more licenses without appropriate studies. Special interest groups are covering up valuable statistics, i.e., Uber, Lyft, and Sidecar.
A balance cannot be achieved with so

much deception. We already have more vehicles per capita than any other city in the industrialized world, not just United States. If D.C. cabs pay the lowest rents in the nation, and cannot meet their financial obligations like they're crying about, then the market must be oversaturated.
As they're saying, they cannot pay $250, and all the three jurisdictions near us go above 450, all the way to about 700 and change. Nor can the special interests fulfill their promises of new vehicles when the drivers cannot afford the older vehicles.
These special interests will promise anything to muscle their way unfairly in to the industry. Legislation, regulation, or precedence, has never promised an H-Tag for any licensed drivers. They need to know that. When do we stop catering to these special interests that only recycle lawyers with ancient rhetoric?
I recall Ms. Vasquez, who is a lawyer for one of these groups, claiming her clients were not against H-Tag limits, at a hearing

before Chairman Linton. This was last year. When will the limits be appropriate then? After her clients get their H-Tag, and the next lawyer comes, and she wants another thousand H-Tags?
COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.
MR. MEDGHALCHI: Thank you.
COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Mr. Swailes.
MR. SWAILES: Good afternoon. My name is Edward Swailes, and so I need to spell that last name?
CHAIRMAN TAPSCOTT: Spell your name.
MR. SWAILES: Okay. No problem. It's S-w-a-i-l-e-s. First name is Ed. First, let me thank the Commission for having this opportunity to speak before you, and in the interests of transparency, I should also mention that I have a contract with TransCo as a manager of driver instruction and industry relations.
And in preparing this presentation today, I also did a collaboration with the National Association of Railroad Passengers, who helped me prepare some of the statistical data

that I'm going to give out to you today.

Let me back up here and say that, you know, I think that the Commission's consideration of the H-Tags, just having that on the table is something that gives us all an opportunity to speak about it, and give us a chance to air obviously different views in terms of whether they should be or not be. But I think it gives an opportunity to clear the air as well, in terms of where each entity of individual stands in that position.

First, I will say my position in all this is that I would recommend that the Commission do, that the Commission would consider - not just consider but actually put in effect a lifting of the moratorium on H-Tags. And my reasoning for saying that is that I think that the market itself is clearly in a growth pattern, and part of that growth is because of an increase in population, which we all know has occurred.

And according to the Wikipedia, in 2014, the District had a population of 658,893

people, an increase of 36,000 just over one year. That's an average of 3,000 new residents per month. Those residents, by large numbers, are young, professional, and have a lifestyle that does not lend itself to car ownership but for the use of vehicles like vehicle for hire. Bicycles. Go-cars You know, most of those persons are not doing ownership.

For that reason, I think that that has created an opportunity for other organizations, or companies like Uber, who have come in to this city, and who do make money and don't have a cap on the number of drivers that they can have. They continue to not just grow the market, in terms of making the market bigger because of their investment in advertising, their investment in community services, their investment in their drivers.

That I think is - and an example of that, which I want to share is, I just, the other day, was in Southeast, and I saw where Uber was having a free gas campaign. If you sign up to be

with Uber, you get free gas.

There's no cap on their number of drivers. If they can afford to give free gas out to their drivers and pay them, obviously, then that must say something about their model, business model, that is being implemented where they make money and their drivers make money. Instead of the District cab drivers, owners, Commissions, I think going through the hassle of competing with each other, my - that was two? I was all ready --

(Laughter)

MR. SWAILES: I'm just getting started, man.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: The wave just means you have about 15 seconds.

MR. SWAILES: I'm going to skip. Okay. Okay. The Uber piece. But just to give some data, quick data. Uber, which now controls about 40 percent of the market, that market has grown by about 20 percent over the last two years. So that means cab drivers that were in Washington

prior to Uber have lost, really, about 20 percent of the market. That 20 percent could be gained back with the continued growth of the market, if we were able to increase our H-Tags --

(Applause)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: I have to stop you there, sir. You have some fans there, but I have to stop you. But look - I do encourage you to --

MR. SWAILES: I want to turn this in.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Submit your testimony to us. Submit your testimony to us for the record, so that we can put --

MR. SWAILES: Okay.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Because you have some very valuable information. So as we deliberate, those are some of the factors that we take in to consideration.

MR. SWAILES: Could I just end by saying --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

MR. SWAILES: Thank you. For this. But

I want to submit it as a revised.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: That's fine. The record remains open until August the 13th.

MR. SWAILES: Great.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay. And if there's anyone else that would like to submit written testimony, we do encourage you to submit that. Okay? Thank you, panel. I appreciate it. The next several panels have two minutes apiece, so I'm going to call your names according to the list submitted. And again, we can't force you to leave but we do encourage you to exit the room once you've testified, so others may have an opportunity to occupy the room.

Okay. First up, I think Yakoub Yakoub already spoke. You can ask him, not me. Okay. Mohamed Ali. Please. Gizau H-s-a-s-h-s-a-r - excuse me - h-s-m-a-r-e. So okay. Mr. Afzal. A-f-z-a-l. Lemmesa Hunde. L-e-m-m-e-s-a H-u-n-d-e. No? Kadissa Bahru. B-a-h-r-u. Reshaun Reda. R-e-s-h-a-u-n R-e-d-a. Mohammad Shemu. S-h-e-m-u. Last name Ab3be. First name is Abebaw. A-b-e-

b-a-w. A-b-e-b-e.

Alemayehu Ayane. A-y-a-n-e is the last name. A-y-a-n-e. Zelalem. Z-e-l-a-l-e-m. Last name is G-u-d, I believe l-e. Tadele Bayeta. B-a-y-e-t-a. Eyoel Tesfaye. E-y-o-e-l. Okay.

Abdul Ariyibi. A-r-i-y-i-b-i. Oh, okay. B-i-w-a-c-h-e-w. Is that you, sir? Abdul. Okay. Okay. Okay. We have five. Okay.

Gentlemen, you each have two minutes to speak, and we can begin.

MR. ALI: Good afternoon, panel. My name is Mohammad Ali. M-o-h-a-m-e-d. A-l-i. Mohamed Ali. I'm -- really been here, you know, I'm very happy to be, you know, in front of the panel, but the notice was very short. I just heard two days ago, and I didn't be informed, but what I'm coming to say today is a lot of companies, they are complaining about not to be issue for H-Tag. The fee they have is - it's not fair, because other D.C. - I'm - I've been in D.C. for over a decade, and I have no tag. So what I'm saying, the market is dead. The Uber,

they have the market, has D.C. visitors who ride their cabs. We can buy our own car and compete with them.

Most of our customer, they say because the car we driving is old, unclean, un - because we cannot compete with the Uber. But the Uber drivers, they own their own car. So if we got our own car, we could compete with them. And the industry, the taxi industry, they fear because they want to lose. This is America. They don't have to fear. This is free country. We make competition. Competition is open for everybody. So I'm asking, you know, the panel to be, consider to open, to give the H-Tag.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

MR. ALI: You're welcome.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Please. Can you pass the microphone down, please. Thank you.

MR. AFZAL: Good afternoon everyone. My name is Faisal Afzal. So my concern about DCTC, like my question is, one hand, DCTC giving the license, but other hand no tags. So we have

to go to a different cab companies, and the cab companies, they charge us their choice of the rent. Some of them. And another thing is like, you know, we working in a district, in a city, one of the best city in the nation, but their cabs are not good. Their cabs are stinky. Some of them like, you know, old cabs. So if we could ever to get the H-Tag, so we have opportunity, we can put in nice decent car. So that's going to help the business, that's going to even help the consumer. So my request is, so H-Tag should be requesting for DCTC, and they should allow the H-Tags, so that's going to help all the drivers who are hustling on the roads, and dealing with the other cab companies, which has gone really tough for them.

So that's going to -- big relief for the drivers. So that's going to help the business, and some of them, some cab owners saying they're going to put the new vehicles on 2017, I just heard. So why not now, instead of waiting for 2017. We just got to do the action,

just got to make that happen, instead of like, you know, anything like - I appreciate.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. Again, when I wave it, it just means you have about another five or ten seconds.

Please spell your name, sir. Yes?

MR. BAHRU: Taddesse Bahru. B-a-h-r-u, my last name. Okay. Thank you for the Commissioner and the panel, and my first - my title is on the back side of the slogan. The slogan is: The driver is extended arms of the DCTC Commission.

MS. BOCOCK: Could you repeat that again.

MR. BAHRU: The driver is extended arms of DCTC. Do you understand what I mean? So it is three corner of - it's benefit and use, and it is very important for the DCTC. The first one is we need H-Tag because when, on the weekends, on Friday and Saturday, I've been working for D.C. drivers, I think for four months. Within this four months, I -- with the Friday and Saturday,

it is a lot of, a lot of, a lot of customers. Within 7:00 p.m. until 1:00 a.m., I think for - I got for 25 fares. That's it.

So the rest, from Monday to Friday, from 9:00 to 10:30, there's a lot of flagging hands, especially the Congress, the Senate. So this is nation capital city. So we need issue tag. We need tags.

First, these convertible cars, for instance, for the hybrid car. That's it?

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: You have 15 seconds.

MR. BAHRU: Okay. And the rest of the business is healthy, safe, and the net services for the nation capital, the next market is easily convertible, and the third one's due to the gas consumptions. Because the hybrid gas is electrical car. So you don't need for too much gases. So due to these reasons, it's concerning for all the Commissioner, the panelists, and to take into considerations giving the H-Tag.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you for

your testimony. Next. Please spell your name for the record.

MR. TESFAYE: Thanks so much. My name is E-o-l-e-y-o-e-l. And the last name is T-e-s-f-a-y-e. I would like to say thank you very much for the panel giving us this opportunity to speak out.

So I would like to start from reminding the DCTC some points that we are - the DCTC, or our district's strong arms, and well-trusted, well-trained, and licensed by the office, by like your office.

So why all these questions? Why all this, like hearings? And why all this meetings to provide us H-Tag? While non-trusted, or non-issued companies, or drivers, are doing the same thing? And I would like to ask you one question too. Don't you give us an ambassador? We are your ambassadors. Why all these questions to provide your ambassador the H-Tag?

Okay. The other thing. Remember, you are saying, or questioning your ambassador to

give up ,or to provide H-Tag. It's not our museum, or the Newseum, or the even the Capitol. It's your drivers, or the cab drivers, the first attraction of our District. So imagine treating this - drivers like this. So the rental companies are not treating us very well. And I'm fini - I'm done almost.

So I am saying that the DCTC is not treating us as well. So I'm not sure if the DCTC is doing a favor for the rental companies, but we are - we just need, you know, the tag. So it's not only Uber or Lyft should be considered as to remove from the business, but also some companies there, which are treating the drivers very unfairly. So you should reconsider this, to remove some companies too from the business.

And last, I want to say that we, your ambassadors, deserve the tag without any questions. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. Please, sir, pronounce your name.

MR. ARIYIBI: Hi. My name is Abdul

Ariyibi. A-b-d-u-l. A-r-i-y-i-b-i. Thank you for giving me, and us, the opportunity to speak to you today. This is my first time. Someone told me about it, and then I just popped in. And you guys might have to excuse me a little bit. I've been driving cab for about 25 years, and last year I went home - well, I got sick, I had to go home for a few months, and then came back. Got okay, and then I had to be readmitted at the hospital, Inova Hospital in Virginia, Fairfax County. And came back. I couldn't get back my tag. And this really create a lot of hardship on me, and a lot of other drivers that I've spoken, and drive, and sitting here today.

We are asking you, kindly, to think about our situation, economic situation, social situation with our family, because now we have to put in many, many hours in order - in fact, we don't even meet our economic obligation to pay these cab companies. It's really hard on us.

We have given our services to Washington, D.C., and like the last speaker just

said, we have gone through a lot of scrutiny by the DCTC Office, the hack inspectors, and the police officials. Please consider us, and helping us. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. Thank you.

All right. B-i-w-a-r-c-h-u. C-h--I think your initials is E.G. I can't - your cursive is a little tough to read. Mr. Eskinder Damonte. D-a-m-o-n-t-e. Wassinu E-n-d-a-l-a-w. Napoleon Tesema. Gurmu - your last name is Gurmu G-u-r-m-u.

Yee N-a-i-n-g. You are --

(Off mic comments)

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: G-u-r-m-u? Okay. Yee Naing. I'm going to go back through this list, and maybe some folk who signed up didn't show up.

Last name H-s-m-a-r-e. First name is Gizal. L-e-m-m-e-s-a-h-u-n-d-e. Last name B-a-h-r-u. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Rishon Rita. Mohammed Shimu. A-l-e-m-a-y-e-h-u.

Zalemum G-u-d-l-e. B-a-y - oh, I'm sorry. He testified. Excuse me. B-i-w-a-r-c-h-u. Again, initial is E.G. I believe, or E.J. I can't understand your writing. Sorry.

D-a-n-t-e. W-e-s-s-a-g-n-u. Napoleon Tessema. Yee N-a-i-n-g. E-n-c-h-a-l-l-e-u. First name, D-e-m-e-k-e. Okay.

E-m-i-r-u. Okay. L.T. are your initials? Okay. Michael S. S-i-s-a-y. Sisay. Israel Gomez. Please have a seat. That's three. Again, E-n-d-a-l-a-w. Signed up twice. F-a-n-t-a-h-u-n. S-h-u-b-e. Please have a seat. And Mr. Gashaw Birbo.

Okay. Because Mr. Gashaw Birbo signed up, he pre-registered, I'm going to give him three minutes, and the rest of the panel gets two minutes. Okay. So all right. You have testimony. Thank you, sir. Okay. All right.

Again, please spell your name for the record. Thank you. You have two minutes.

MR. GUSU: I was also pre-register, so I can get three minutes instead of three - two?

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay. please begin.

MR. GUSU: Good afternoon. My name is Emiru Gusu. First off, I would like --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Please spell it. Please spell it for the record, so we can be very clear. It's being recorded. Go ahead.

MR. GUSU: E-m-i-r-u, first name. And last name is G-u-s-u. Good afternoon. First of all, I would like to thank DCTC for arranging these panel discussions to share our opinions on H-Tags. Then I'm in support of DCTC to issue H-Tags to anybody, a person who have face ID, or a company or association, who can purchase a new car, which is fuel efficient, comfortable for passengers, and fitted with wheelchair accessible.

Please don't give tags only to taxi companies, and push the drivers to work for taxi companies. That is totally unfair, and discrimination. I am a cab driver, as well as my colleagues, are facing the following problems

from District of Columbia taxicab companies due to DCTC are pushing us to rent cars from taxi companies instead of providing our own tags, tag numbers.

Among the problems we encounter from the cab companies are: Increasing of rent from time to time; the absence of cabs for rent; the quality and comfort of the cabs available for rent is very poor; the cars are getting older and driven for many years. Because of this, our customers are not satisfied with our service.

Poor customer service from taxi companies, and the owners are not willing to listen to our complaints when we first - also we are unable to compete with other independent cab drivers, and other independent drivers working for Uber and Lyft.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: I have to stop you there. Thank you for your testimony, sir. Thank you.

Next, please. Please spell your name for the record, if you don't mind.

MR. ENCHALLEW: Yes. Thank you very much for the opportunity. My name is Demeke Enchallew. D-e-m-e-k-e. Last name, E-n-c-h-a-l-l-e-w.

CHAIRMAN TAPSCOTT: Pull the mike a little bit closer to you.

MR. ENCHALLEW: All right. Thank you, sir.

I like to start by thanking DCTC for the new apps that we are testing now. I'm one of the guys who's testing the app, and app is going to be very, very nice, and it's going to reduce most of the complaints here I think, if we advertise it, and let the people know. The app's going to bring back most of the business that we are losing with other app companies.

And by saying that, to use this app in proper way, and to expand the business, DCTC should issue the H-Tag because we're going to take on-call businesses from the app, with the technology, so we have to be everywhere. So we need more drivers on the street, to the people to

use the app. And I'm - in my opinion, it's better to even - to give H-Tag for Uber drivers to have their own car, and to bring them back, and use the app, and get more money for DCTC and to have a better service for the - for themselves and for the DCTC.

The other thing is my personal thing, I want to add is, families with disabled children should have H-Tag, because this will give them flexible schedule to take care of the kids, and to make more money for living, and keep them from getting more assistance from Government. So please try to issue with families who got disabled children, H-Tag, and that will help lots of things. That's my point. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Gomez.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes. My name Israel Gomez, and I-s-r-a-e-l G-o-m-e-z. And thank you very much for bringing this agenda, and I've been driving taxi for 19 years, and this time I return my tag because I fell ill and I went back home,

and I didn't know, when I came back, I didn't know they lock up the system, the status, or - and I that I'm telling that it's very hard to rent a car because the business very slow, and I don't want to become like homeless or something like that.

So I - please give H-Tag or something like that, because we are citizens, Washington, D.C. We vote for the mayor, Muriel Bowser, and also for council member, and also for the House of Representative, Eleanor Norton, and that's because we are citizens, and we should have the same equal rights like everybody else. Like big corporation come in, and they give the - got the business, switches over, or something like that. And thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, Mr. Gomez.

Yes, please.

MR. SHUBE: Good afternoon. My name is F-a-n-t-a-h-u-n. Last name, S-h-u-b-e. Again, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity

to speak to the panel, to issue H-Tags. I was licensed since 2009, and I was always asking when I can get H-Tag and buy own car, which is efficient for economy, for gas, hybrid gas, put on the street, and can drive, helping myself or my family, and also help for the public. But we are what is pushing the problem, they are - is to rent a car, or cab companies. The cab companies are not competitive in market of 21 Century like we, or other, my colleague on panel spoke earlier. And they are not competitive enough, and that's why so many company came, and by increasing the productive of - in the taxis, or public service, by 20 percent, like he said, and - so we need all people who has license, and should be given opportunity once you are, we also professional drivers, we deserve it as a citizen, make, to get own car, efficient car, and issue to us H-Tag and to make market, profitable in the market, and thank you very much for listen me, and for consideration to issue.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

MR. BIRBO: Good afternoon. My name is --

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: You have three minutes Mr. --

MR. BIRBO: Gashaw Birbo.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Yes.

MR. BIRBO: First of all, I would like to say thanks to DCTC for listening to drivers and the customer concern, and arrange this great discussion on improving customer service, and safety, by motivating drivers who are directing the primary impact on the taxicab business.

As trained and licensed for hire, business drivers, we deserve to be given the priority to operate in the District than other competitors like Uber, Lyft, and other drivers who work for themselves, buy their own car, though they never pass through any authorized department's policies. My second point is the existing driver associations have been protesting whenever DCTC tries to modernize and to make change on the cab business.

As an example, they had been opposing the proposed rule to restore meters as pre customers' requests, so that they can pay by credit card. So it should not be new to DCTC if they bring selfish and imaginary reasons to oppose issuance of H-Tag to us.

Is that because Uber and other associations are saying the business is saturated, or just to oppose, bluntly, as usual, DCTC's proposal to modernize the business with qualified and devoted drivers.

With thousands of other competitors, for-hire cars operating in the District, what is the meaning of opposing trained and qualified drivers to work and to compete? Individuals and the associations gave up to compete in the market, and they are happy to make easy money because of the opportunities that DCTC arranged for them to rent their car to us, so that we can work 16 to 20 hours to pay their unfair rent, to go home - and to go home with nothing.

In my belief, DCTC is here to help

drivers and listen to customers' demands, working in favor of nonexisting, unqualified, and the traditional cab companies and associations. That did nothing in modernizing the business and listening to basic customers' demand. If DCTC is responsible for regulating vehicles-for-hire business in the District, what is the reason for worrying about limiting the number of H-Tag that should be issued to the licensed drivers, when other competitors are increasing their number in thousands, with no limit and control?

So let DCTC give us the tag, make us free from slavery, and let the market decide eventually. And finally - I just got a little bit. Based on the current quantity and the quality of taxis operating in the District, the customers still demand more fuel-efficient, which are accessible, and safe cab services operated by devoted and trained drivers, regardless of thousands of unregulated companies that should not be considered legal by DCTC. Thanks.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir.

Thank you. All right. I will continue down the list of non-preregistered individuals. Abdul Wahab Hassan. A-b-d-e-l. W-a-h-a-b Hassan. Okay. Excellent. Abdul Mek Shifa. S-h-i-f-a is the last name. S-h-i-f-a is the last name. K-e-d-i-r Ibrahim. K-e-d-i-r Ibrahim. Okay. Please. What's your name, sir?

MR. HASSAN: Abdul Shifa.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay. Abdul Shifa. Okay. Negi Tochi. Negi. N-e-g-i N-e-g-i Tochi. N-e-g-i. Ziri Hun. Z-i-r-i H-u-n-f-e-y-s-s-a. F-e-y-s-s-a. Dawit Wossaru. D-a-w-i-t W-o-s-s-a-r-u. Yarid Lakew. L-a-k-e-w. L-a-k-e-w. G-e-t-i-n-e-t T-i-y-i-h. Okay. All right. Thank you. Tesfaye Lima. Tesfaye Lima. Okay.

So those are the remaining names. We can begin. This is the last panel. Okay.

MR. HASSAN: Good evening. My name is Abdul Wahab Hassan. A-b-d-e-l W-a-h-a-b Hassan. H-a-s-s-a-n.

Probably you recognize from the number of participating drivers, that there is, has been

a problem. The Commission was more interested in the modernizing of the business and were not interested in - or giving enough interest to the drivers. Solving the H-Tag issue will solve many of their problems. It's not too late. I think myself, I think that the problem could be solved by returning the balance between the carrier of licenses and the H-Tags. I know it might not happen right away, it could not happen right away, but it could happen if you have a strategy, and if this is your intention, it will happen gradually.

How can you get tags? A company who is not taking care of the car, who is not maintaining it, who is refusing to do the safety for the car, for the drivers, should be - you should be able to put rules to get this tag be available to driver. Driver are more trusted to maintain their cars.

Also there are individuals who own two or more tags while others are renting, and those are - they are not - they don't own these for

money, they just own it so they can only own one. So there are ways to get tags, and, you know, gradually. You should have a plan, so gradually, we would have the balance between licensed carriers and tag carriers. Of course I would ask for those who already have one, and to have the priority of getting their tags back. Thank you so much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir. Please pronounce your name for the record.

MR. SHIFA: Good afternoon. My name is Abdul Mek Shifa. A-b-d-u-l M-e-k Shifa. S-h-i-f-a. First thing foremost, I would like to thank the panel discussion and the DCTC who facilitate this panel discussion. Is very important for us to explain to our griefs, and we are grieving because of not getting the right car to drive in - the right customer but with the right cars, and because as the previous speaker noted, we become like -- because DCTC gave us, and hijacked us, you know, because DCTC gave us the license but not the ownership of H-Tag. And this reminds

me one of my American history class. Frederick Douglass once said like when, during his emancipation speech: The slave becomes free from the slave owners but slave to the street. We become slaves of the street, because we go - like even nowaday, like they talk each other, the companies, when we - if you are not fired or something happen to you in one company, you cannot get a car from other companies. They're communicating that much.

And so DCTC is like I think responsible to modernize this technology, because it's giving - right now, it's giving a Third World customer service, because the cars are very dilapidated, they're worn out, everything. If you give us a chance to have H-Tag, we'll buy fuel-efficient cars, and disabled also for - to facilitate every individual who comes to my car.

And so how could you expect a smile to come to my face while I'm feeding the taxicab company before I feed my children? And so I would like to encourage and recommend DCTC to

issue an H-Tag for all drivers, without any distinction, whether they come today or not. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you. Sir, please spell your name for the record.

MR. SHIFA: Good afternoon. My name is Kedir, K-e-d-i-r. Last name, S-h-i-f-a. Shifa. First of all, thank you for this panel, and the reason why I would like to ask DCTC to issue H-Tag is a lot of my colleagues have been mention the reason why. We cannot compete with like Uber, Lyft, such companies, because we don't have, you know, decent car. You know? There's - I have a lot of customers encounter on - while I'm driving taxi, they been telling me that the reason why switch to Uber - because the cars are not comfortable. That's the main thing.

Personally, I would like to have H-Tag. I can make my own money; you know? By the end of the week, my money goes to the rent. You know, like my friend just mentioned, we are slave, slave outside. We cannot make money. The

money you make goes to rent. So you end up nothing. Zero. Just rent. So we need H-Tag to, you know, facilitate, buy decent car, and go out on road and compete with Uber; you know? There is app - DCTC app which is - we can beat Uber if everybody, all drivers get H-Tag, we can beat Uber with that app.

So I would really appreciate if you - you know, it's not supposed to be an issue, to give H-Tag for driver. This is a free country. This is the world capital, yet we still work as slave, you know.

So thank you for that opportunity.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

MR. TIYITI: Thank you, panelists. My name is Gestinet, G-e-s-t-i-n-e-t. Last name is T-i-y-i-t-i. When we are hitting the -- very, very different issues, including the ones like providing the fuel efficient and the one, wheelchair accessible, still before like, before this hearing decided, or to give final decision, still the DCTC is supporting or like favoring the

companies, because I saw on the Web site, the DCTC is favoring for the companies grants like to purchase the new wheelchair accessible, like more than 750,000. Still the DCTC is supporting or favoring for the companies for wheelchair accessible.

We are requiring to purchase the new one, or the new one, and the fuel efficient - why they are doing this one before this hearing is decided? You know, still, we are not considered in this requiring or in this issue. This is my question.

The other one. It's not at this time regulating or like limiting the taxi drivers from getting H-Tags, it's not like - it's not up to them, because as you see private drivers, or private transportation, they are controlling the market because they are out of regulation or out of their regulation, because they are doing freely, you know, because they have their own tag, their - they have their own and everything.

So we need same kind. We do like this

service freely and competently. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir. Appreciate. Thank you. Thank you, panel.

Okay. So that was the last of the folk who registered, who had signed up and pre-registered.

Is there anyone else in the you guys can leave. Thanks. Is there anyone else in the room that would like to testify, that have not pre-registered, or has not signed up today? Is there anyone who'd like to testify? If so, please come to the table and we will allow you to give your name, and give your testimony.

All right. This will be our last person to testify. Okay. Please spell your name.

MR. TEMTEM: Thank you very much for giving me a chance. My name is Luleseged Temtem. L-u-l-e-s-e-g-e-d. Last name T-e-m-t-e-m.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Okay.

MR. TEMTEM: I really - I am the driver, which I have a tag after 2006. So I am

affiliated with a company. Because of that, I have to be in the company to drive in D.C. So because of that, I been forced to pay more monies and extra monies at the same times. Also without my willingness, they can put us anywhere they want without telling us.

So because of that, why we being we suffer like that just because we don't have a tag. So on my case, I personally, I believe I need to have the tag because I got - I was trying to have a tag before 2006, before the law is coming. So I try to get a tag but the DCTC closed three times.

So because of that, after I pass one exam, and then waiting for the computer exam, DCTC shut down his program. So because of that, when they open, the time is changed and they changed the new rule. So I believe I start paying, and attend the class before the law, and I pay the money before the law.

So the DCTC's problem is they closed before telling us. When they opened, they change

the rules, so we stuck. So why we get, slave for this company without even our willing, and just because of we don't have a tag. So it is very important to give - at the same time, also I don't have any problem to give any tag for everybody. But we should have a limit. It is ludicrous to say, when Uber flooded the city, to say not to give to our brother another tag, it is very sad for me. The Uber is flooding the city. But I believe those people, they were designed, the signature, not to ask a tag before they get the license. I think they already put themself on that. So I think that's the reason they don't get.

But in my case, I don't have any problem to give everybody, but when the Uber come and flood the city, still, they are our brother and sister. Otherwise, they should have a limit, some kind of limit for the city. Thank you very much, sir.

COMMISSIONER MUHAMMAD: Thank you, sir. I appreciate it, and that was our last

guest, Chairman.

CHAIRMAN TAPSCOTT: This meeting is adjourned at 1:30 -- 1:40. Thank you very much, everyone attending today, and we will be looking at this, the whole panel, and there will be a decision later.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 1:45 p.m.)

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